

# City of Columbus



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Andrea Blevins, City Clerk  
Columbus, Ohio

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**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

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# **City Attorney 2023 Annual Report**

In 2023, the Columbus City Attorney's Office advanced a number of key priorities, including a focus on reducing crime in Columbus neighborhoods by prosecuting thousands of violent and dangerous criminals, cracking down on problem properties, improving public safety across the city, and continuing to lead on the issues that matter most to residents.

City prosecutors handled over 10,000 criminal prosecutions in 2023, including over 7,000 domestic violence, 2,500 drunk driving, and hundreds of other criminal cases where prosecutors asked for tough sentences to hold offenders accountable. In May, City Attorney Klein began pushing for \$500,000 bonds for dangerous domestic abusers who pose the greatest threat to victims and their families. City Attorney Klein also stood alongside the Columbus Police Division to ramp up enforcement and prosecution of street racing and reckless driving offenses, took a hard line against hate and bias crimes, and filed a number of ethnic intimidation charges, most notably in response to anti-Israel vandalism and threats at the Ohio State's Jewish student center.

While prosecutors pursued extensive criminal dockets throughout the year, City Attorney Klein also noted the expansion of the City's first-of-its-kind diversion program focused on rehabilitation over prosecution for certain low-level, non-violent theft offenses. This initiative helped 63 offenders successfully complete the *Buckeye Diversion Program*, while dozens of others enrolled in the program were connected with resources to address their needs and decrease recidivism.

The City Attorney's Office worked alongside police investigators and code enforcement officers to shut down 17 problem properties and file lawsuits against a number of dangerous bars, after-hours clubs, drug houses and other businesses known for violent crime, such as the Wilson Road Greyhound Bus Terminal and Jack's Corner Pub.

The City Attorney's Office also kept a close eye on nuisance apartment complexes, including securing a multi-million dollar contempt fine against the owners of Latitude Five25, following them to bankruptcy court in New Jersey when they tried to dodge fines and winning a court battle to appoint a receiver to take over the property.

At the Southpark Apartments, City Attorney Klein announced a signed agreement to improve safety, bolster security and maintain sanitary living conditions, and at Colonial Village, the City took swift legal action to hold the lender, receiver and former property manager in contempt of court after property inspections uncovered hundreds of residents and families living in substandard units that were under court order to be boarded up and vacant. Additionally, the City continued to support the Owner Occupied Initiative, a program created under City Attorney Klein that connects lower income, largely elderly residents with resources to fix code violations to keep these owners in their homes.

City Attorney Klein also continued to use the power of the City Attorney's Office to promote public safety and the voices of Columbus residents at the state and national level, including ongoing court battles to fix the state's broken criminal background check system and implement common-sense gun safety measures such as safe storage requirements for households with children.

Additionally, the Solicitor General's section filed proactive litigation to hold Kia and Hyundai accountable for skyrocketing vehicle thefts in Columbus and to hold multi-national chemical corporations liable for their negligence in the production of dangerous forever chemicals. The office also signed onto *amicus* briefs defending women's access to reproductive care, opposing a ballot measure to steal power away from Ohio voters, and defending federal prohibitions on violent domestic abusers from possessing firearms.

The City Attorney's Office also played a pivotal role in the expansion of services for domestic violence survivors under the city and county's coordinated *Blueprint for Safety* framework and worked closely with City Council to expand the *Project Taillight* program to provide no-cost car repairs for low-income residents.

### **The Claims Section**

The Claims Division investigates pre-litigation tort claims against the city that exceed the sum of \$2,500.00. These tort claims include personal injury and property damage claims. The Claims Division also manages the collection of delinquent debt owed to the city after city departments have exhausted remedies and prior to initiating litigation. If a matter cannot be resolved in the pre-litigation stage, then the Claims Division files suit.

The Claims Division administers the collections agency contracts for the City Attorney's office, and other city departments may utilize their services as well. The three current collections agency contracts that were in place in 2023 were awarded through the FRP process in 2019, and were approved by Council in 2020.

The combination of both in-house and outside collection agency delinquent tax collections brings in substantial funds to the city each year. As of December 31, 2023, a total of \$2,522,875.50 was recovered through these

collection efforts for delinquent tax collections. The Claims Division filed 790 new tax cases and collected \$1,081,785.90 in delinquent city income taxes in-house.

The Claims Division also collected \$88,323.35 on behalf of non-tax clients through both court actions and direct debtor contact. Those clients include the Departments of Public Utilities, Fleet Management, Public Service, Licensing, and Recreation and Parks. A total of 109 new cases were received by the Claims Division to pursue the collection of non-tax debt. In 2023, outside collections agencies collected a total of \$292,519.98 on non-tax accounts referred to them on behalf of city departments.

There were 64 new tort claims against the city received by the Claims Division through December 31, 2023. Twenty tort claims were settled, and 37 were denied. Some of these tort claims were filed in 2022, with their investigations continuing into 2023. In total, \$230,855.97 was paid out to claimants on behalf of city departments to settle property damage or personal injury tort claims filed through December 31, 2023.

### **The General Counsel Section**

The General Counsel Section serves as the primary legal counsel to city officials on issues relating to city services, legislation, contracts, zoning, and other vital issues associated with the day-to-day operations of city government. In addition, this section assists in the legal review and practical implementation of various development projects that foster the growth of our community. The section also works to keep our environment clean by assisting various city divisions in complying with state and federal environmental laws.

In 2023, the General Counsel Section reviewed 1,696 contracts in the City's procurement system in addition to hundreds of bespoke agreements for city departments. Further, the General Counsel section was responsible for reviewing approximately 2,215 ordinances for consideration by City Council as well as providing legal assistance on dozens of noteworthy community projects. Finally, for the fifth year in a row, attorneys from the General Counsel section volunteered their time as adjunct professors and guest speakers at the Capital Law School, teaching a class in local government that seeks to bring the real world of public legal service into the classroom.

During the year, attorneys in the section worked with their departmental and Council clients to provide legal guidance on a number of policy initiatives. For instance, the section worked extensively with the Development Department's Housing Division in expanding Community Reinvestment Areas to encompass almost the entire City so as to create opportunities for more affordable housing. The section also continued to assist the City Auditor's Office in stepped-up enforcement of collection of the City's admissions tax to be distributed in support of the Greater Columbus Arts Council. As the City worked to advance the Intel project, attorneys in the section provided legal support to the Departments of Development and Public Utilities. Further, attorneys assisted with the development of solar installations at two Department of Public Utilities properties. The attorneys in the section also provided pivotal legal support to close on the North Market/Merchant Building mixed-use project in the heart of downtown Columbus to allow construction of the redevelopment to begin. The section also had its hand in advancing the City's flavored tobacco ban and in providing guidance to the workings of the Civilian Police Review Board. Finally, in addition to supporting many of the varied legislative initiatives of Council and the Office of the Mayor, the section provided legislative drafting support to each of the City departments.

### **The Labor and Employment Section**

The Labor and Employment Section is responsible for handling all labor and employment-related litigation involving the city. The section defends the city in arbitrations involving disciplinary and contractual issues, in discrimination claims filed in federal and state courts, and before various administrative agencies. The section also engages in policy review and renders legal advice to city officials and managers on all labor and employment matters, this includes advising on issues involving any one of the six collective bargaining agreements. In addition, the section works to ensure the city maintains compliance with the laws, policies and regulations that impact the thousands of full-time and part-time individuals employed by the city.

The section was assigned to handle more than 75 new cases that were brought against the city in 2023. This included an increasingly high number of cases before the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Ohio Industrial Commission. Over the course of the year, more than 50 cases were resolved, 75% of which were successfully resolved in the city's favor. On top of a demanding caseload, the Labor and Employment attorneys fielded many calls and requests for legal advice and assistance unrelated to pending cases. The attorneys worked closely with the human resources professionals from various departments throughout the city to troubleshoot difficult issues. The attorneys also conducted trainings and provided updates and review sessions for the city on an assortment of matters.

### **The Litigation Section**

The Litigation Section defends the city and its employees in all types of civil litigation. While litigation occurs in other sections of the office, the Litigation Section's caseload principally deals with lawsuits in the federal and state courts (trial courts through appellate courts) and claims against the city and its employees that seek monetary damages based on allegations of personal injury, property damage or violation of constitutional rights.

In 2023, the Litigation Section was assigned to handle more than 65 new cases that were brought against the city, seeking a total of \$55 million dollars in damages. Over the course of the year, more than 75 cases seeking a total of \$12 million dollars in damages were resolved, 15 of which were settled for a total of \$3.1 million. Additionally, the Litigation Section continued working with city departments and their employees through training, advice and counsel to improve city practices and policies so that future lawsuits may be successfully defended, if not prevented.

### **The Police Legal Bureau**

The Police Legal Bureau provides comprehensive legal advice to the Columbus Division of Police for the wide range of legal issues that impact Division police officers. Attorneys in this section deliver around the clock “real time” advice to police personnel—as they are on call 24/7. In addition, this section provides legal training to Division of Police recruits, cadets and to current officers during yearly in-service.

**Training:** (250+ hours in 2023) The demands made of the legal advisor section by police for legal training has continued to increase over the past several years with additional police recruit classes, expanded In-Service legal training for veteran officers, and bureau specific training on important topics such as search warrants and *Miranda* rights. 2023 was a very busy year from a training perspective. This training involved hundreds of hours of preparation and presentation. Recruit legal training is unique in that recruits from several other Central Ohio police departments also attend the Columbus Division of Police Training Academy, which not only brings entrepreneurial training monies into the city, but also leads to unity in training for officers from multiple jurisdictions with which Columbus officers have contact. The legal advisors also provided bureau-specific training wherein they went to individual police sections and conducted training on their specific issues. In-service training in 2023 was very thorough as there were two different In-Service sessions—one in the spring and one in the fall—for a total of five hours of in-person training with every CPD officer. The advisors again spent hundreds of hours preparing and presenting this training, which is unique because it allows every officer of the Division of Police to have in-person training for multiple hours with a legal advisor.

**Real-Time Legal Advice:** The police legal advisors receive multiple inquiries from officers every day. These inquiries vary from brief, easily answered questions to complex legal questions. Inquiries are made via email, phone and in-person. Several hours a day are spent giving legal advice to the Division of Police.

**Legal Updates and Division Wide-Emails:** The police legal advisors distribute legal updates to all Division of Police Officers for up-to-date legal information generally on a monthly basis. They also have sent out several Division-wide, or Bureau-wide emails this year related to various ongoing crises.

**Meetings:** This is hard to quantify because the Police Legal Advisors are regularly asked to attend meetings where legal issues might arise, but they easily attended over 100 meetings. Given the challenges of this past year, many of those were either via Zoom or other similar platforms.

**Liaison:** The legal advisor section continues to function as a liaison between the various sections of the City Attorney’s Office and the Division of Police.

**Review of Division Directives/SOPS:** Division policies are regularly reviewed for legality and to assure that the Division of Police can maintain its accreditation status. This, too, is difficult to quantify, but the advisors spent at least 100 hours reviewing/rewriting such policies.

### **The Prosecutor Division**

Located at 375 S. High St. in the Franklin County Courthouse complex, the Prosecutor Division is responsible for the prosecution of misdemeanor offenses on behalf of citizens of the City of Columbus and the State of Ohio. From case initiation in the Prosecution Resources Unit to defense of successful prosecutions in the Appellate Unit, prosecution provides a wide array of services attendant to the resolution of criminal allegations and complaints. In addition to the services provided to the citizens of Columbus and the unincorporated areas of Franklin County, this division also represents, by contractual agreement, a number of Franklin County municipalities. The division consists of assistant city prosecutors, the legal assistant unit, the Prosecution Resources Unit, the Domestic Violence & Stalking Unit, and the Appellate Unit.

According to Section 68 of the Columbus City Charter, “[t]he city attorney shall be the prosecuting attorney of municipal court. He may detail such of his assistants as he may deem proper to assist in such work. He shall prosecute all cases brought before such court and perform the same duties, so far as they are applicable thereto, as are required of the prosecuting attorney of the county.”

Consisting of 20 courtroom prosecutors, six domestic violence prosecutors, two arraignment team prosecutors, an environmental prosecutor, an administrative assistant, and 24 legal support staff, the unit prosecuted over 10,000 misdemeanor cases initiated in the Franklin County Municipal Court in 2023, including thousands of domestic violence and impaired driving cases.

This unit is also responsible for processing requests for production of public records in the Prosecutor Division, and for processing municipality billing for prosecution services. In 2023, dozens of requests for public records were responded to in a timely fashion. The division also generated revenue by providing legal services to area municipalities.

- **Intake Section:** Offering citizens the opportunity to have allegations of misdemeanor criminal violations reviewed by a prosecutor, the Intake Section processed hundreds of citizen complaints, approving criminal charges when appropriate. The Unit also provided protection order and other public agency referrals.
- **PRU Mediation Program:** This program operated in the evenings with volunteer mediators from the Moritz College of Law, Capital University Law School, Nationwide Insurance and members of the alternative dispute resolution community in an effort to resolve disputes without resorting to criminal prosecution.
- **Domestic Violence Advocacy:** The Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit provides services to victims of misdemeanor domestic and stalking related crimes. They provide advocacy, safety planning, referral information, and assistance with obtaining protection orders. A courtroom advocate manager, administrative services manager, and 19 22 full-time victim advocates, including two Spanish speaking advocates, attempt to make contact with every victim before each court date and escort them to court hearings in every courtroom. All advocates are trauma informed and culturally competent. The Unit employs six support staff.
- **Stalking Advocacy:** A cyber crime investigator and a grant-funded stalking advocate work with victims experiencing repeated unwanted, distressing contact. The stalking staff assists victims with safety planning and protection orders, escorts them to court dates, and works closely with law enforcement as they build cases. The team meets weekly to review cases for possible felony enhancement.
- **Specialized Prosecutors:** The unit includes specialized domestic violence prosecutors who prosecute only DV and DV related cases. They are specially trained to handle the most-involved, high risk cases (most often involving repeat offenders, weapons used or brandished, severe injuries and children, elderly or pregnant victims). They are trauma informed, culturally competent and understand the ripple effect of domestic violence.
- **Other Resources:** The unit houses a Franklin County Children Services worker; and a branch of the Capital University Law School's Family Advocacy Clinic to help with protection orders, and a Franklin County Children's Services worker.

The Appellate Unit consists of a director, an assistant city prosecutor, a paralegal and a staff of legal interns. In 2023, the Appellate Unit briefed and argued numerous cases in the Tenth District Court of Appeals. The unit also was responsible for the filing objections to applications for record sealing, as well as responding to hundreds of defense motions.

The Prosecution Division also created an innovative program to connect those with nonviolent offenses with opportunities for diversion rather than prosecution. That program saw a recidivism rate of less than 10 percent.

City prosecutors in 2023 continued City Attorney Klein's policy to forego the prosecution of misdemeanor marijuana possession. Under Klein's leadership, Columbus was also one of four cities nationally selected by the American Prosecutors Association to receive a grant to develop pre-adjudication theft diversion through creative and data-driven changes to prosecution, all with a focus on public safety.

### **The Solicitor General Section**

Under City Attorney Klein, the City of Columbus has taken an active role on national policy issues affecting Columbus residents. The City Attorney's Solicitor General's section has continued its efforts to challenge state laws that prevent the City's authority to take real, meaningful action to keep Columbus streets and neighborhoods safe. The City is actively engaged in litigation to protect the ability of local governments like Columbus to enact gun safety measures unique to the needs of their communities. The City has brought litigation over state laws that prevent the city from regulating firearms and knives. It has also defended the City's ordinances which mandate the safe storage of firearms and limit the size of high-capacity magazines. The City's litigation against the State's



background check system continues to move forward after a court denied the state's motion to dismiss. The City's litigation against automakers Kia and Hyundai, due to skyrocketing thefts due to substandard security systems in certain vehicles, continues. These thefts have cost taxpayers and threatened public safety as the group of unlicensed juveniles largely behind the surge in thefts recklessly operate the stolen vehicles on Columbus roadways. The district court denied the manufacturer's motion to dismiss and the City is engaged in discovery in this case. Finally, the City has brought litigation against manufacturers of PFAS, also known as forever chemicals. These chemicals can end up in the water supply and can be dangerous if consumed.

In addition, the City also has signed onto numerous amicus briefs on important state and national issues, including briefs urging the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the federal government's bans on bump stocks and ghost guns. The City has also joined briefs that interfere with parental rights on issues of medical treatments.

### **The Real Estate Division**

The Real Estate Division is responsible for the acquisition of all real property interests needed by city departments, the provision of legal assistance with regard to all real estate matters, including the sale and leasing of property, utility easements, right-of-way dedications, and matters related to real estate property taxes. The Real Estate Division also provides legal and negotiating services for a number of major transactions, including closings on 6.5 acres for future Division of Police operations, 4.5 acres for Public Utilities' Williams Castle Interceptor Project, a parking lot to support the of Hilltop Early Learning Center, as well as future parkland, including 58 acres of a former railroad corridor for a new linear park connecting Linden and the City's new Kilbourne Run Sports Park.

In 2023, the Real Estate Division also provided legal advice, instrument preparation, ordinances, resolutions, negotiating services, and processing of instruments involving projects resulting in more than 319 permanent land acquisitions, all of which will contribute to development in Columbus.

The Real Estate Division also handled deed and instrument preparation and other assistance related to the city's Land Bank, involving dozens of instruments. The Real Estate Division also prepared and assisted in processing several mortgages and releases in connection to the Septic Tank Elimination Project.

### **The Zone Initiative**

Working closely with the Division of Police, Code Enforcement, Columbus Public Health, sanitation and community organizations, the Zone Initiative team focuses on eliminating public nuisances that blight neighborhoods. Whether it is abandoned and deteriorating houses, open dumping, street prostitution, boot joints, excessive noise or trash and debris, this unit seeks to eliminate these problems.

To that end, the attorneys assigned to this unit were visible in the community attending meetings and making presentations on how citizens and city government can work together to improve the quality of life in Columbus' neighborhoods.

Using the statutory jurisdiction of the Environmental Division of the Franklin County Municipal Court, this unit files complaints for injunctive relief, seeking equitable solutions to persistent problems.

The Zone Initiative acted aggressively to protect the safety and security of Columbus neighborhoods, shutting down dozens of drug houses and ensuring safe and sanitary living conditions at Columbus apartment complexes. The team continued to work with the Columbus Police Division to grow its community immersion program and Project Taillight, a program that funds repairs for safety equipment on vehicles of low-income residents to reduce unnecessary police interactions. The Zone Initiative also continued to grow the Owner Occupied Initiative, a program that funds home repairs for low-income seniors, allowing them to remain up to code and stay in their homes.

They also attended approximately 200 in-person and virtual community meetings, approximately 100 in-person and virtual police meetings, and approximately 50 in-person and virtual Code Enforcement meetings. They also filed several high-profile criminal nuisance abatement cases using the statutory authority under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3767, along with over 500 code enforcement nuisance abatement cases under Columbus City Code Title 47 for housing and building code nuisance abatement.

# **City Auditor and Income Tax 2023 Annual Report**

**MEGAN N. KILGORE**

City Auditor

**DARLENE WILDES, CPA**

Deputy City Auditor

THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**

OFFICE OF MEGAN N. KILGORE,  
CITY AUDITOR

March 29, 2024

Ms. Angie Blevins  
City Clerk  
City Council  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

### **2023 Annual Report to City Council**

Dear Clerk Blevins:

Submitted herewith is the annual report of the City Auditor, City of Columbus, Ohio, in accordance with Section 231 of the Columbus City Charter for calendar year 2023.

An independent audit is conducted of the City each year. The audit for 2023 is underway. When complete, the annual financial report containing the independent auditor's report will be posted to the City Auditor's Office website.

The following report simply details certain data applicable to the Department of City Auditor, Accounting and Reporting Division 22-01, and the Division of Income Tax 22-02.



Megan N. Kilgore  
City Auditor



**City of Columbus, Ohio  
 Department of City Auditor  
 Division 22-01 City Auditor  
 December 31, 2023**

**Total Expenditures**

	2023
Personal services	\$ 4,708,512
Materials and supplies	32,491
Services	750,121
Other disbursements	8,495
Capital outlay	-
Total Expenditures 22-01	<b>\$5,499,619</b>

**Hotel/Motel/Short-Term Rental Tax Collections**

Chapter 371 of the City Code provides for the collection of an excise tax on transient lodging accommodations. The City Auditor administers the collection of the tax. The following table shows the gross receipts of the last ten years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>(in thousands)</u>
2023	\$26,524
2022	23,360
2021	15,904
2020	10,097
2019	23,743
2018	22,788
2017	22,354
2016	21,332
2015	20,497
2014	18,507

**MISCELLANEOUS DATA**

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Invoices Paid	138,886	127,031	115,779	120,370	132,915
Receipts Posted	10,279	10,508	9,185	10,411	13,705
Disbursing Warrants Written	69,858	66,235	59,998	59,383	69,043
<b>Funds and subfunds accounted for:</b>					
General Funds	8	8	8	8	8
Special Revenue Funds	62	62	60	57	57
Agency Funds	33	33	32	29	30
Debt Service Funds	23	24	24	24	24
Internal Service Funds	15	14	14	15	15
Capital Projects Funds	94	92	90	89	86
Enterprise Funds	60	60	56	52	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>272</b>

### Admissions Tax Collections

Effective July 1, 2019, the City of Columbus levies a 5% tax on amounts received as admission to any place located within the City of Columbus. O.R.C. 715.03 and Chapters 375 and 376 of the City Code are the legal authority for the admissions tax. The following table shows the gross receipts of the last five years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>(in thousands)</u>
2023	\$13,561
2022	10,462
2021	3,598
2020	1,918
2019	1,253

**City of Columbus, Ohio  
 Department of City Auditor  
 Division 22-02 Income Tax  
 December 31, 2023**

The Columbus Income Tax Division is charged with the collection, audit, and enforcement of the 2.5% municipal income tax pursuant to Chapters 361 and 362 of the Columbus City Codes.

Financial data contained in this report reflects actual collections, refunds, etc., as recorded by the Income Tax Division of the City of Columbus. Such data may vary from that contained in the Auditor's official fund accounting records due to the normal time requirements for processing documents prior to being recorded with the City Auditor. A reconciliation of the data appears below.

The following is a report of Columbus income tax collections for 2023:

	<u>(in thousands)</u>
Gross collections in 2023 via Income Tax Division	\$ 1,175,528
Transfers to others	(12,911)
Collections in transit 12/31/2022	17,476
Collections in transit 12/31/2023	(6,532)
Refunds paid in 2023	<u>(36,947)</u>
Income tax revenues (Budgetary Basis)	<u>\$ 1,136,614</u>

The funds collected from the tax are allocated for municipal purposes as set forth in Chapter 362.013 of Columbus City Codes.

Columbus City Code provides 25% of the total collection of income tax to be set aside for the payment of debt obligations issued by the City, as well as other various expenditures excluding personnel costs. The remainder provides the General Fund with its major source of revenue.

Withholding accounts contributed to	<b>79.8%</b> of the total tax revenue for Columbus in 2023.
Business accounts contributed to	<b>15.9%</b> of the total tax revenue for Columbus in 2023.
Individual accounts contributed to	<b>4.3%</b> of the total tax revenue for Columbus in 2023.

By contract, this Division administered the collection of the municipal income tax for the following municipalities in 2023: Northern Pickaway County Joint Economic Development District (JEDD), the Prairie Township JEDD, the Madison Township JEDD, and Grandview Yard. For the administrative service of collecting the income taxes for these entities, the Columbus General Fund received collection fees based on a formula incorporating the gross income tax collections for each of these political subdivisions of the State of Ohio. Fees collected during 2023 for administering the income tax collections of the administered political subdivisions of the State of Ohio amounted to \$10,468.45. This is to be compared to \$17,279.10 in fees collected in 2022. The Northern Pickaway County JEDD, the Prairie Township JEDD, the Madison Township JEDD, and Grandview Yard have separate formulae for calculating the cost of administering their respective tax.

The total expenditure to operate the Income Tax Division during 2023 was \$9,770,983. This includes salaries, fringes, income tax forms, new equipment, data processing charges and miscellaneous supplies including postage. This represents administrative service for income tax collection for Columbus as well as the JEDD entities. The authorized strength of the Income Tax Division in 2023 was 80 full-time positions and 1 part-time position.

City Income Tax receipts processed in 2023 through the Collections Enforcement Section amounted to \$3,415,560. This amount included delinquent tax, penalty and interest charges for Columbus. This figure represents delinquent collections through the Tax Division, the City Attorney's Office and the outside collection agencies. During 2023, the Income Tax Division referred 1,133 cases to the City Attorney's Office for filing civil suits on delinquent assessments totaling \$5,613,009.

On December 31, 2023, the Division has 478,729 tax accounts on record.

**Franklin County Municipal Court  
Judges  
2023 Annual Report**



## FRANKLIN COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT

375 South High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4520

Chambers of  
**Judge Mark Hummer**  
Administrative & Presiding Judge  
Telephone: 614/645-8207

May 1, 2024

Franklin County Municipal Court Clerk  
Citizens of Franklin County

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to provide you with the 2023 Annual Report of the Franklin County Municipal Court, as mandated by section 1901.14 of the Ohio Revised Code.

As Ohio's largest and busiest municipal court, we are dedicated to improving our services to every citizen who appears in our court, while being responsible stewards of taxpayer resources. We value the financial support we receive and strive to uphold your trust in our operations and spending of taxpayer dollars.

The increasing complexity of laws and the diverse needs of our citizens present significant challenges to our judges and staff. However, as detailed in the following report, our judges and staff remain fully committed to meeting these challenges and serving our community with dedication and fairness.

We are constantly working towards improving our services and fulfilling our obligation to interpret the laws of Ohio fairly.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Court Administrator Emily Shaw or myself at (614) 645-8214.

Yours truly,

/S/ Mark Hummer

Mark Hummer  
Administrative and Presiding Judge

Enclosure



# **THE FRANKLIN COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT**

**375 South High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4520  
614-645-8214**



## **2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Franklin County Municipal Court has a rich history dating back to its inception as the Columbus Municipal Court in 1916. Today, the Court's jurisdiction covers all of Franklin County, as well as portions of the City of Columbus that extend beyond the county boundaries. With 14 judges in the General Division and one in the Environmental Division, the Court plays a vital role in the administration of justice in the region.

The judges who served the Franklin County Municipal Court in 2023 are Administrative and Presiding Judge Mark Hummer, and Judges James Green, Andrea C. Peebles, James P. O'Grady, Cindi Morehart, Cynthia L. Ebner, Eileen Paley, Jodi Thomas, Jarrod Skinner, Jessica D'Varga, Gina Russo, Mike McAllister, Bill Hedrick, Mary Kay Fenlon, and Environmental Court Judge Stephanie Mingo. Judges in the Court serve six-year terms, unless appointed or elected to fill a vacancy, and annually elect one of their peers to serve as the Administrative and Presiding Judge.

The judges preside over a wide range of cases including civil, criminal, and traffic cases, and conduct both jury and court trials. In jury trials, the judges interpret the law, while the jury determines the facts. Court trials, on the other hand, are the most common trials in the Court, where judges have the dual role of interpreting the law and determining the facts.

In addition to presiding over trials, the judges also conduct criminal arraignments, and preliminary hearings on felony cases, set bonds on criminal charges, issue search warrants, and impose sentences when a defendant is found guilty of a traffic or criminal charge. The judges also hear civil cases with an amount in controversy of \$15,000 or less, as well as small claims cases transferred to the General Division of the Court. Civil disputes such as evictions, rent escrow proceedings, and proceedings to aid in collecting judgments are also resolved in this Court.

The Environmental Division of the Court has exclusive jurisdiction to enforce local codes and regulations affecting real property, such as fire and building codes. The Environmental Division has injunctive powers, and there is no monetary limit on cases falling within its exclusive jurisdiction.

Furthermore, each week, a different judge is assigned to the Duty Session, where they handle a variety of responsibilities, such as applications from law enforcement officers for search warrants, probable cause hearings, and civil wedding ceremonies.

The Franklin County Municipal Court takes pride in its role as a cornerstone of the local judicial system and remains committed to upholding the highest standards of justice, fairness, and efficiency in its operations.

## **ASSIGNMENT OFFICE**

The Assignment Office provides the Franklin County Municipal Court with case management, case flow, and administrative support on all assigned judicial and magistrates cases. The Assignment Office administers case support beginning with judicial case assignment or magistrate case assignment through case termination. Additional case support is provided on post-judgment actions on civil cases and post-sentence management on criminal and traffic cases, such as scheduling vehicle immobilization, probation, and sealing of record hearings. The establishment of the department is authorized per R.C. 1901.33(A) – and consists of an Assignment Commissioner, one Chief Deputy Assignment Commissioner, nine Deputy Assignment Commissioners, one Assignment Support Specialist, and four Assignment Case Specialists.

## **BAILIFFS**

Bailiffs play a crucial role in coordinating activities within the courtrooms. They are responsible for scheduling cases, managing the docket, providing information to the public regarding case statuses, and serving as liaisons between the assigned judge or magistrate, attorneys, court personnel, and the public. Each judge has a designated courtroom bailiff, and there is also an unassigned bailiff available to provide coverage in case of the judge's absence, a duty room bailiff, and two arraignment bailiffs. Additionally, each magistrate is assigned a bailiff for support.

## **COURT ADMINISTRATION**

The Court Administration is responsible for overseeing the administrative and operational functions of the Court. It implements the non-judicial policies of the Court and provides overall support and direction to the Court's 280 employees. Some of its specific functions include personnel management, budgeting, fiscal management, purchasing, liaison with other courts and agencies, public information, appointment of counsel, court services, court security, interpreter services, vehicle immobilization, and volunteer services. The Court Administrator serves as the chief non-judicial officer.

## **COURT REPORTERS**

Court Reporters play a vital role in maintaining an accurate and complete record of court proceedings by creating a verbatim transcript upon request. They also ensure that records of exhibits introduced during court proceedings are properly maintained. In 2023, the Department was staffed with a team of highly skilled professionals, including one chief court reporter, eight full-time court reporters, and four part-time court reporters.

## **COURT SECURITY**

Court Security is committed to providing a safe environment for all individuals, including elected officials, Court employees, and visitors. Our dedicated team consists of a security director, three supervisors, one control room operator, and 18 security officers on the first shift. Additionally, we have a control room operator on the second and third shifts. To further enhance our security measures, we have partnered with a reputable private security company to provide coverage during daylight, evening, weekend, and holiday hours.

## **COURT SERVICES**

The Court Services Unit plays a pivotal role in providing support and assistance in various day-to-day operations, including the Duty Room, Court Services public counter, bailiff coverage, and vehicle sanctions. Comprising of a team of 5 full-time and one part-time employee, the Court Services Unit ensures that these critical functions are carried out seamlessly and efficiently.

The Duty Room, overseen by our Judges on a weekly rotating basis, handles a wide range of matters, including approval of Magistrate decisions, ruling on motions filed on all non-assigned civil cases, conducting civil ceremonies, signing search warrants, and addressing show cause hearings, exemption requests, objections to Magistrate's decisions, warrant set-asides, and other miscellaneous duties.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION**

The Environmental Division, also known as "The Environmental Court," in Franklin County has successfully implemented unique sentencing strategies to address vacant and abandoned properties and persistent offending landlords. The Environmental Division, under Judge Mingo's jurisdiction, handles nuisance abatement cases involving various types of properties, such as derelict hotels, businesses violating health department orders, liquor establishments violating the law, drug houses, and other residential and commercial properties engaged in illegal and nuisance activities. These activities can include drug sales, underage alcohol sales, violation of health department orders, human trafficking, and violence. The Environmental Division also hears cases related to environmental crimes, code violations, and other environmental matters filed within the County, including animal abuse and neglect, dog fighting, wildlife violations, littering, illegal dumping, air, and water pollution, hoarding, and code enforcement violations.

## **JURY COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE**

The Jury Commissioner's office collaborates with its software provider, the Board of Elections, and the Courts Technology department to load a new list of prospective jurors for each calendar year. This ensures that all courtrooms, including those of the 15 judges and 7 magistrates, have the required number of jurors daily to cover the approximately 80 potential jury trials that take place in the Municipal Court.

Jurors are expected to commit to a two-week service period, for which they are compensated with a daily payment of \$15 for their attendance at court. However, jury service is limited to two weeks, unless additional days are needed to reach a verdict. To help defray parking expenses, jurors are provided with vouchers for the three local parking garages, as well as bus passes for the COTA bus line.

## **LANGUAGE SERVICES**

For the year 2023, the Interpreter Services Program (ISP) employed two full-time Spanish language interpreters and one full-time Somali, MayMay, and Swahili language interpreter, and contracted one part-time Spanish and one part-time Somali language interpreter. The ISP's mission is to have interpreters who provide ethical and professional services in a uniform and transparent manner. The Court routinely monitors the performance of on-site and remote interpreters for accuracy, completeness, transparency, and confidentiality, while abiding by the Code of Professional Conduct for Judiciary Interpreters and Translators. The dedication and professionalism of our contracted ASL and foreign language interpreters, who serve the bench and all limited English proficient (LEP) parties daily, are essential to our ability to offer all parties access to justice and equal protection under the law.

## **LEGAL RESEARCH**

The Legal Research Department researches and prepares memoranda on issues pending before the Court, maintains research and reference materials, reviews new case law to ensure the Court's compliance with the decisions, reviews pending legislation that may affect the Court, and advises the judges and employees regarding new legal developments and applications of current law to court procedures. The Director also serves as a part-time magistrate and liaison to the Court's Self-Help Center.

## **MAGISTRATES**

The Court employs five full-time General Division magistrates and two part-time magistrates who preside over traffic arraignments, landlord-tenant actions, wage garnishments, small claims cases, and other civil matters. The Court also employs one Environmental Division magistrate who presides over criminal and traffic arraignments and hearings, all civil pre-trials and status conferences, and other civil hearings and manages the civil docket of the Environmental Division. Judges may also refer specific cases to magistrates to take testimony, make legal rulings, and render decisions that are subject to final approval by the referring judge. Magistrates have the authority to accept guilty and no-contest pleas and to impose penalties in misdemeanor traffic cases. Magistrates may hear minor misdemeanor criminal cases or civil cases tried without a jury as well as contested criminal cases and civil jury trials with the parties' consent.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PRETRIAL AND PROBATION SERVICES**

The Department of Pretrial and Probation Services (DOPPS) is responsible for serving the Franklin County Municipal Court Judges, under the immediate direction of the Court Administrator. With a staff of approximately one hundred individuals, the DOPPS is the largest division of the Court. The DOPPS is committed to excellence in rehabilitation through evidence-based practices, with a mission to reduce recidivism, change offender behavior, and foster accountability, ultimately promoting community safety. The DOPPS follows an evidence-based paradigm that utilizes validated risk assessment tools and a differentiated, risk-based supervision construct.

To achieve risk reduction and compliance with court-ordered conditions, the DOPPS collaborates with those under its supervision to establish and work towards agreed-upon goals. These assessment-driven supervision goals and requirements may include a variety of programs such as residential programming, cognitive-behavioral interventions, behavioral health assessments, educational programs, counseling for mental health and/or substance abuse needs, and random urinalysis.

The DOPPS has committed to becoming a data-driven department, collaborating with the Judges of the Court to achieve this goal. As part of this commitment to transparency and evaluation of outcomes, the Department prepares and shares with stakeholders a quarterly evidence-based practices (EBP) outcomes dashboard report. This report is instrumental in informing practices, identifying additional training or resource needs, and ensuring that the DOPPS is meeting its goals of risk reduction and public safety.

## **SELF HELP CENTER**

The Franklin County Municipal Court Self-Help Center serves as a valuable resource for pro se litigants in navigating the Court. The Center's primary objectives are to enhance the quality of filings by pro se litigants, improve access to the justice system for individuals who cannot afford legal representation, and foster positive engagement between the Court and the community. While the Center assists visitors with

civil issues in the Municipal Court, it does not offer legal advice. Common issues addressed at the Center include sealing and expungement of criminal records, as well as landlord/tenant disputes.

2023 was another year of success for the Self-Help Center and Dispute Resolution Department. As the first full year of operating as a combined department, every program saw growth and success. The Mediation program mediated more cases in 2023 than ever before with higher success rates than ever recorded. The Mediation program also continued to build relationships with local law schools to give students opportunities to learn more about mediation while expanding the capacity of the program. The Self-Help Center launched a new Eviction Prevention Coordinator position in 2023. This new navigator position provided basic triage and wayfinding assistance to individuals present at Eviction Court. In its first year, the Eviction Prevention Coordinator position has already been cited as a national best practice. This program, and all other services provided by the department, continue to be national models for success, leading staff to assist others around the country with creating similar projects. In total, the Self-Help Center surpassed its goal of serving 14,000 Visitors, continuing another year of growth since the project's inception.

### **SERVICE BAILIFFS**

The Service Bailiffs play a critical role in supporting litigants, attorneys, and the Court by delivering court documents to parties and enforcing pre- and post-judgment remedies. Their responsibilities encompass the service of various legal documents, such as complaints, summonses, criminal and civil subpoenas, garnishments, juror letters, and probation revocation hearing notices. The enforcement of writs of replevin involves the seizure of property to be returned to the rightful owners, while writs of execution are carried out through the levy and sale of personal property to satisfy judgments. These writs are enforced and supervised by highly trained deputy bailiff officers. Additionally, deputy bailiff officers oversee the set-out of tenants' property during the eviction process, ensuring compliance with legal requirements.

### **SPECIALIZED DOCKET DIVISION**

The Specialized Docket Department serves the Franklin County Municipal Court Judges and is directly supervised by the Court Administrator. The department manager is responsible for the overall operation, supervision, and certification of the specialized dockets, ensuring funding, and overseeing the operating budget. The manager works closely with the Specialized Docket Judge's Committee and holds bi-annual meetings with the Specialized Docket Advisory Board to set department goals and direction. The department oversees five specialized dockets, two educational programs, twelve coordinators who manage day-to-day operations, and the administrative management of the Municipal Court's forensic psychological referrals.

We appreciate the support of our partners, stakeholders, and the community in our efforts to make a positive impact on the lives of individuals involved in the justice system.

For detailed information about the Franklin County Municipal Court  
please visit its <https://franklincountymunicourt.org/>

**Franklin County Municipal Court  
Clerk  
2023 Annual Report**

**FRANKLIN COUNTY MUNICIPAL CLERK OF COURT  
ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

The Clerk's Office collaborates daily with agencies of the Justice System and the community to ensure access to justice and promote public trust and confidence. In 2023, the Clerk's Office focused on initiatives aligned with its Mission, Vision, and Value Statements.

New case filings totaled 124,665 compared to 116,367 filed in 2022 for an increase of 7.13%. Costs, fines, and fees collected equaled \$37M compared to \$33.7M in 2022 for an increase of 9.8%. The total amount referred to collections was \$2,445,819.75, for a decrease of 7.13% over 2022. Overall collection of court-ordered fines and costs through the efforts of four collection agencies decreased by 16.84% from 2022, for a total of \$814,895.10. The collection of court-ordered bond forfeiture judgments decreased by 42.8% from \$156,566.50 to \$89,562.75 respectively.

During 2023, the number of agencies submitting electronic citations expanded from two (2) to five (5). Of the 46,831 Citations filed in total, 14,916 or 32% were electronically submitted. In 2023, 25,348 new criminal/traffic case filings were accepted through an online electronic filing system. The Clerk's Office also received more than 859 registrations for the E-Filing portal.

Additionally, Ohio Revised Code Section 2953.39 was added, authorizing prosecutors to file applications on behalf of defendants with low-level controlled substance convictions. The Columbus City Attorney's Office worked collaboratively with the Clerk's Office to file 317 electronic applications. Electronic Workflow was then employed by the Clerk's Office to accept, process, and send documents to the Court for its review and signature.

The Clerk's Office teamed up with CTV to create a training video for its ClaireVista Live-agent Kiosks. System and software updates were made to the Kiosks for future deployment to the new jail for collection of bond, fines and costs.

Civil case filings increased in 2023. The most notable were the number of evictions filed totaling 23,904 for an increase of 13.92% over 2022, which is a new twenty (20) year high.

The Office of Information Services added new security measures through Microsoft 365 such as two-factor authentication and new infrastructure upgrades to web servers. Access to court case information is available in two forms. Public access is available to anyone who has internet access. Additionally, Next Gen (recently upgraded from Secure Network) is available through password protected internet access and is provided to government agencies and attorneys.

The Clerk's Office participated in several community service projects in 2023. The Franklin County Municipal Court Self-Help Resource Center sponsored an off-site one-day Record Sealing and Expungement Clinic in September. The Clerk's Office assisted in serving 224 individuals with their applications. In late October, the Clerk's Office hosted the Third Driver's License Reinstatement Workshop at a local community center. An estimated 371 people were assisted by nineteen (19) agencies including The Legal Aid Society of Columbus, The Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles, and judges and magistrates from the Franklin County Municipal Court. Over \$47,000 owed to the Court was set aside and approximately \$24,000 was forgiven by the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles for a total of more than \$72,000. This workshop allowed participants to get answers to their questions in one place, without having to make trips to multiple locations, which can be a great burden especially without a valid driver's license.

Programs like this help diminish the barrier between the court and the community and promote public trust and confidence. They shine a light on our passion for public service. I am proud of the work my office does to ensure that these programs and services are accessible to the people who need them most.

**Clerk Administration Division**

The Administration Division of the Clerk's Office is comprised of the Office of the Clerk, Chief Deputy Clerk, Executive Director Public Relations, Executive Director Fiscal Administration, Director Human Resources, Administrator Payroll & Benefits, Assistant Fiscal Administrator/Procurement, and Administrative Assistant. This

Division oversees the daily operations of the Clerk's Office and is governed by directives as set forth in the Annual Budget and the Ohio Revised Code. Additionally, all new programs, contracts, projects, and grants are established and implemented within the Division. It conducts all public relations and internal communications for the Clerk's Office. Accomplishments for the Administration Division in 2023 are as follows:

- Managed nine (9) separate budgets totaling more than \$18.3 million.
- Prepared and processed ordinances totaling \$1,090,912.90 for approval by Columbus City Council.
- Expanded our authorized strength to 186 full-time staff to meet legal mandates and standards.

### **Office of Information Services Division (OIS)**

The Office of Information Services (OIS) provides services related to information technology to the Franklin County Municipal Court and Clerk's Office staff. This Division's responsibilities include maintaining a stable electronic work environment, collaborating with other agencies and staff to use information technology to better serve the Franklin County Municipal Court, identifying emerging technologies for the Court's investment in technology, and providing training to staff on the proper use of software programs and equipment. Accomplishments for the Office of Information Services Division in 2023 are as follows:

- Upgraded Secure Access to NextGen framework to improve user experience and encourage a paperless environment in the courtroom.
- Revamped and optimized eSubpoena delivery for Franklin County Sheriff's Office.
- Expanded the Law Enforcement Portal for E-Filing of Investigative Subpoenas and Search Warrants.
- Amassed and provided data for the Federal Justice Counts initiative.
- Completed new infrastructure upgrades for Clerk web services to increase performance and reliability.
- Created a new process for Expungement Cases e-filed by the City Attorney to be reviewed by the Duty Judge.

### **Audit/Internal Controls and Imaging Division**

The Audit and Internal Controls Division is responsible for minimizing erroneous data through a system of real time process assurance and monitoring, audit reporting, and quality management. The objective is to achieve operational effectiveness and efficiency, assure reliable and accurate financial reporting in compliance with state and local laws, regulations, and policies. The main purpose of the Division is to help direct and protect resources of the Clerk's Office while improving internal processes and services that the Franklin County Municipal Court Clerk's Office provides to its customer base, the Court, law enforcement, all external partners and most importantly, the public. Other responsibilities include, balancing four (4) depositing accounts monthly; verification of funds with the financial institution and the case management system (CourtView); and collaborating with a private auditing firm (annual audit); monitoring PCI compliancy; auditing, maintaining and submitting the Ohio Supreme Court Report; and monitoring and auditing online payments received.

The Audit and Internal Controls Division also houses the Clerk's Imaging Department. Closed case files are prepped by divisions and sent to the Imaging Department for imaging and shredding. Some case files are stored until their expiration date and shredded, based on the Clerk's Office's Retention Schedule. Accomplishments for Audit and Internal Controls/Imaging in 2023 are as follows:

- No security breaches with our credit card processing in 2023 and are fully compliant with PCI DSS security, (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard).
- Directed 2022 annual audit conducted by the State of Ohio Auditors Office: 13th year, zero financial and case management infractions.
- Submitted annual financial statistics to the City of Columbus Auditor's office.
- Submitted annual Operating Indicators Report to the Franklin County Auditor's office.
- Completed bank statement reconciliation for our 4 cashbook depositing accounts. (Criminal/Traffic, Civil, Rent Escrow, Trusteeship) All accounts reconciled on time per O.R.C. requirements.
- The Imaging Department scanned 2,265,092 pages, a 48% increase from 2022.



### **Civil Division**

The Civil Division is responsible for accepting, filing, issuing service, docketing, processing, and maintaining records for Civil cases. Civil cases include contract disputes, personal injury, property damage, evictions, small claims, certificates of judgment, cognovits, declaratory judgments, and Civil Environmental including housing/safety code issues. The Civil Division also processes applications for driving privileges. Accomplishments for the Civil Division in 2023 are as follows:

- Restructured the incoming mail processes to improve efficiency.
- Established monthly meetings with Clerk's technology staff to advance E-Filing.
- Reached out to major law firm filers to encourage E-Filing.
- Created an electronic workflow between the Clerk's Office and the Small Claims for case scheduling.
- Cooperated with the Court to bring the daily case limit for eviction hearings from fifty (50) to sixty-five (65) cases.

### **Collection Division**

The Collection Division oversees and coordinates the collection of debts owed to the Court, with the primary objective of seeking monies due to the City of Columbus taxpayers. The Collection Division operated in conjunction with four (4) outside agencies. Additionally, the Collection Division is responsible for securing surety bond agent registration, monitoring compliance of State and Local Statutes, and processing monthly billing statements. Accomplishments for the Collections Division in 2023 are as follows:

- Collected - \$814,895.10
- Continued generating past due notices in-house for payable tickets.
- Bond money forfeited by the Court for 2023 - \$26,637.50
- Total of Bond Forfeiture Judgments paid for 2023 - \$33,105.00
- Managed billings and compliance for twelve (12) active bond companies and fifty-one (51) active surety agents.

### **Criminal/Traffic Division**

The Criminal/Traffic Division processes and maintains Criminal, Traffic, and Environmental Criminal cases. The Criminal/Traffic Division provides a multitude of services to the public, law enforcement, and the Court. This Division plays an integral role in the promotion of public safety by providing support twenty-four (24) hours per day to law enforcement agencies throughout the County. Documentation is provided to the Franklin County Sheriff's Office once bond has been posted and then the defendants may be released. The Division also processes applications for the expungement of case records as well as maintaining and securing records which have been ordered by the Court to be sealed. Other examples of service include administering oaths, accepting criminal and traffic charges, filing motions, filing search warrants, providing information about court cases, dispositions, future court dates, as well as assisting in the courtroom. Accomplishments for the Criminal/Traffic Division in 2023 are as follows:

- Created an internal audit process for warrants issued by deputy clerks.
- Added a new file room email address (criminalfileroom@fcmcclerk.com), to improve public access to record requests.
- Encouraged law enforcement's participation and ongoing communication regarding electronic filings including warrants.
- Updated our system to comply with new Marcy's Law Victim's Rights Request forms. Added case management docket codes and worked with justice partners to streamline the process.
- Amended record sealing/expungement process for compliance with S.B. 288. Accepted 317 record sealing/expungement applications sent electronically by the Columbus City Attorney's Office.
- Created and implemented an electronic online application for the preparation of in-custody (4D) courtroom lists.
- Collaborated with the OSU Police Department to accept electronic filing of investigative subpoenas.
- Participated in an expungement clinic hosted by the Court's Self-Help Resource Center at the Milo Grogan Community Center.

### Courtroom Services Group

The Courtroom Services Group (CSG) is a select group of highly skilled Deputy Clerks in the Criminal/Traffic Division responsible for the daily processing and updating of all cases on the Criminal/Traffic dockets. A CSG Deputy Clerk is assigned to each of the Fifteen (15) judges as well as the Traffic Arraignment courtrooms (1A and 1B). Daily, CSG Deputy Clerks docket subpoenas and motions, process unpaid fines and costs, enter sentencing information, issue/recall warrants, process continuances, enter limited driving privileges, add Temporary Protection Orders, image entries, and update bond information along with all other entries in the case management system, CourtView.

Additionally, CSG Deputy Clerks are responsible for routing files to the Assignment Office, Probation Department, Accounting/Finance Department, Expungement Department, Prosecutor's Office, Collections Department, and to the Vehicle Immobilization Coordinator. They also timestamp, docket, and route Statement of Violations filed by the Probation Department. CSG Deputy Clerks run and process case management reports. Each CSG member acts as a liaison between Court personnel and the Clerk's Office. After Court, CSG Deputy Clerks provide assistance to other divisions of the Clerk's Office. The Courtroom Service Group electronically reports several types of Traffic and Criminal convictions to the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV). Accomplishments for the Courtroom Services Group in 2023 are as follows:

- Helped with the development of a filing process for Victim's Rights Request forms.
- Collaborated with the Assignment Office to develop an assigned courtroom process for the Buckeye Theft Diversion Program. Previously only offered on an un-assigned case.
- Worked with the City Prosecutor's office to develop a process for handling Streets of Columbus Summons cases.
- Coordinated with Probation and the City Prosecutor to finalize the "No Contact Order" process, including initiation, modification, and termination.
- Transmitted approximately 60,000 records to the Ohio BMV using an FTP process.
- Terminated approximately 40,000 cases.
- Sent approximately 7,000 cases to collections for failure to pay fines and court costs.
- Continued approximately 40,000 cases.
- Issued approximately 18,000 bench warrants.

### Accounting Finance Division

The Accounting Finance Division oversees the collection and accounting for all fines, court costs, fees, bail/bonds, garnishments, judgments, and restitution which are issued by the Court. The Division processes a monthly disbursement of all the collected funds to the appropriate State, City, County, and Township Agencies. Accounting/Finance also has four (4) internal payment plan programs in compliance with the Ohio Revised Code, Local Court Rules, and an online payment service that is offered through the Clerk of Court website. A separate window for Rent Escrow and Trusteeship filings is located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor outside the Civil Division. The programs are as follows:

- **Time Payment Program** for fines, costs, and restitution, authorized by the sentencing Judge, allows a defendant to make monthly payments for up to twelve months or until the balance is paid in full.
  - Total new sign-ups in 2023: 434
  - Total cases on program paid in full in 2023: 150
- **Rent Escrow Program** allows tenants that have a complaint regarding their residential housing conditions to deposit their rent payment into an escrow account until the matter has been resolved.
  - New cases filed in 2023: 218
- **Trusteeship Program** allows a debtor to deposit a portion of their personal earnings with the Clerk of Court to avoid legal proceedings by creditors. The funds received are disbursed to the creditors equally until all debt is paid in full.
  - New cases filed in 2023: 19
- **Restitution Program** provides victims who have suffered damages compensation as ordered by the Court. Payments are made to the Clerk of Court and sent directly to victims.
  - Payments forwarded to victims in 2023: 1,638

- Total monies forwarded to victims in 2023: \$386,822.63
- Cases with restitution paid in full in 2023: 326

Accomplishments for the Accounting Finance Division in 2023 are as follows:

- Implemented an excel spreadsheet for cashier adjustments to replace individual logs sent to the Cash Office Controller. Increases the efficiency of the process and allow adjustments to be readily available for auditing.
- Began pilot E-Filing expansion project to include Writs and Set Outs on eviction cases.
- Implemented a new process for the City's Parking Violation Bureau judgments (NPV). Added a \$10.00 filing fee to each case filed.
- Worked with the Court to revise the Court's Civil Cost Schedule (Local Rule 13, Schedule 9).
- Per the approved Court Administration Committee Budget Bill, and SB 288, implemented a Local Fee of \$50, to Expungement filings.
- Collected \$852,865.00 from Civil E-Filing and 10,174 cases were E-Filed in the Civil Division.
- Collected \$15,955.00 from Criminal E-Filing and 322 cases were E-Filed in the Criminal Division.
- Collected \$5,408,882 from the online payment service (EPay).

### **Traffic Violations Bureau**

The Traffic Violations Bureau (TVB) initiates all traffic citations, criminal/traffic and environmental complaints issued by law enforcement into the case management system. Twenty-one (21) Municipal Law Enforcement agencies and eight (8) Townships within Franklin County are served, including: Columbus Division of Police, Ohio State Highway Patrol, Franklin County Sheriff, Ohio State University Police, and Port Columbus Police. Franklin County Municipal Court has jurisdiction in three (3) counties: Franklin, Delaware, and Fairfield. Franklin County Municipal Court processes cases for seventeen (17) Mayor's Courts. Cases are transferred for further action before the Court.

The Communications Department operates within the Traffic Violations Bureau. The function of the Communications Department is to further promote ongoing communications and the delivery of excellent public service to the public, law enforcement agencies, attorneys, court personnel, other courts, and governmental agencies. Public Records Requests for traffic related offenses are received daily and timely responses are sent by email or by regular U.S. Mail.

Regular and Certified Mail is received twice per day, sorted, opened, and documented using excel worksheets. Payments received via mail are also included in the excel worksheets for tracking purposes. The Clerk's Office employs one mailroom Deputy Clerk to deliver mail to the City's Mailroom for postage and processing. This Deputy Clerk also drives to/from the U.S. Post Office, the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles, and Columbus City Hall to pick up and deliver mail and interoffice envelopes.

Deputy Clerks image all court documents received to ensure easy access, including mail received with payments, Notices/Summons sent, Statement of Facts from Police Agencies, the Environmental Weight Record, and Fingerprint (ITN) cards. Fingerprint cards received daily contain ITN numbers, which are entered into the case management system manually. Notice letters for new or future court dates on traffic cases are created and mailed. Additionally corrected payment letters are created and sent reminding defendants of the balance owed on their case. Accomplishments for the Traffic Violations Bureau/Communications Department in 2023 are as follows:

- Six (6) law enforcement agencies submitted electronic citations and six (6) additional agencies are in the process of onboarding or have expressed interest.
- 14,916 citations electronically filed (32%).
- 73,939 cases initiated, which includes traffic, criminal, and environmental.
- 4,160 certified summonses mailed out, which includes traffic, criminal, and environmental.
- 1,939 Criminal/Traffic payments logged.
- 1,477 Mayor Court Transfer cases initiated.

To view a more detailed annual report of the Franklin County Municipal Clerk of Court, please visit the Clerk's website at <https://www.fcmcclerk.com/reports/annual-reports>.

# **City Treasurer 2023 Annual Report**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
DEPARTMENT OF CITY TREASURER  
FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023**

The authority and responsibilities of the City Treasurer are set forth in Sections 88 through 96 of the Charter of the City of Columbus. Section 88 specifically states that "the treasurer shall be the custodian of all money belonging to the city and, subject to the provision of any specific trust, of all money held in trust by it."

Specific regulations concerning the deposit of public funds are contained in Chapter 321 of the Columbus City Code, while rules regarding the investment of public funds are covered under Chapter 325.

The average monthly balance of investments in 2023 was \$ 2,716,724,393 with cash-basis investment earnings of \$64,548,425.17 for a yield of 2.68 percent. The investment balance at year end was \$ 2,631,127,913.15. Schedules of all investment activity for the year, and the portfolio composition as of December 31, 2023 are presented later in this report.

Columbus City Treasurer's Office  
 Balance Sheet as of 12/31/23

**ASSETS:**

Cash in Banks	\$	103,915,278.26
Cash-in-Payroll Account		244,274.68
Cash-on-Hand		54,069.75
Currency for Deposit		30,000.00
Receivable Items		14,192.77
Due to Others		6,572,696.59
Returned Checks		137,801.89
Treasury Investments		2,631,127,913.15
Total Assets	\$	2,742,096,227.09

**LIABILITIES:**

Auditor's Warrants Payable	\$	40,501,541.37
Payroll Checks Issued		244,274.68
Advance Receipts		33,432,247.98
Total Liabilities		74,178,064.03
Interest Earned		3,001,337.72
City Fund Balance		2,664,916,825.34
Total Fund Balances		2,667,918,163.06
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	\$	2,742,096,227.09

**Columbus City Treasurer Investment Earnings-Cash Basis 1987-2023**

Year	Earnings	Year	Earnings
1987	\$28,388,518.85	2006	\$40,592,503.35
1988	\$22,060,069.73	2007	\$54,766,454.31
1989	\$25,936,181.69	2008	\$52,196,589.58
1990	\$25,462,770.85	2009	\$18,000,322.49
1991	\$21,972,435.31	2010	\$10,794,788.99
1992	\$14,630,762.90	2011	\$9,003,587.24
1993	\$14,078,568.03	2012	\$6,686,401.60
1994	\$14,407,539.40	2013	\$5,833,439.72
1995	\$21,167,207.89	2014	\$8,484,921.04
1996	\$24,328,056.80	2015	\$10,949,577.63
1997	\$26,925,897.15	2016	\$13,542,174.00
1998	\$29,599,645.25	2017	\$13,921,405.33
1999	\$31,525,495.24	2018	\$23,849,971.44
2000	\$36,981,982.63	2019	\$41,853,190.69
2001	\$40,300,193.79	2020	\$36,321,470.47
2002	\$26,027,402.32	2021	\$20,084,346.03
2003	\$16,136,402.90	2022	\$22,978,283.59
2004	\$10,336,025.03	2023	\$64,548,425.17
2005	\$18,399,091.67		

CITY OF COLUMBUS  
 DECEMBER 31, 2023  
 INVESTMENTS BY TYPE

Desc1·ption	Yield	Amount	%of Portfolio
FFCB Coupon Notes		363,329,124.65	13.68%
FFCB Coupon Notes - Callable		90,242,797.71	3.40%
<b>Federal Farm Credit Bank Totals</b>	<b>1.802</b>	<b>453,581,922.36</b>	<b>17.08%</b>
FHLB Coupon Notes		325,253,586.47	12.23%
FHLB Coupon Notes - Callable		147,387,771.98	5.53%
<b>Federal Home Loan Bank Totals</b>	<b>2.798</b>	<b>472,641,358.45</b>	<b>17.76%</b>
FHLMC Coupon Notes		30,682,310.37	1.15%
FHLMC Coupon Notes - Callable		18,493,195.48	0.70%
<b>Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp. Totals</b>	<b>0.673</b>	<b>49,175,505.85</b>	<b>1.85%</b>
Fm(A Cmpcm Notes		64,333,253.77	2.45%
FN1v1A Coupon Notes - Callable		76,076,612.72	2.91%
<b>Federal National Mortgage Association Totals</b>	<b>1.382</b>	<b>140,409,866.49</b>	<b>5.36%</b>
FAMC Coupon Notes		8,900,000.00	0.33%
<b>Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corp. Totals</b>	<b>0.270</b>	<b>8,900,000.00</b>	<b>0.33%</b>
<b>Treas111 Note Totals</b>	<b>3.106</b>	<b>1,208,664,090.22</b>	<b>46.42%</b>
<b>Federal Gov't Obligations Fund</b>	<b>8.220</b>	<b>31,240,363.23</b>	<b>1.48%</b>
<b>State Ohio</b>	<b>5.570</b>	<b>78,914,695.03</b>	<b>2.96%</b>
<b>State Ohio Covid 19</b>	<b>5.570</b>	<b>100,047,147.16</b>	<b>3.76%</b>
<b>State Rental Assistance</b>	<b>5.570</b>	<b>31,244,744.21</b>	<b>1.47%</b>
<b>JP Morgan Chase Bank</b>	<b>1.760</b>	<b>15,221,260.30</b>	<b>0.57%</b>
<b>Huntington Premier Money Market</b>	<b>0.300</b>	<b>2,942,150.45</b>	<b>0.11%</b>
<b>Municipal Bond</b>	<b>5.006</b>	<b>22,594,354.00</b>	<b>0.85%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,631,127,913.15</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



# **Mayor's Office**

## **2023 Annual Report**

## Mayor's Office 2023 Annual Report

Mayor Andrew J. Ginther's strategic priorities in 2023 focused on his Equity Agenda (Opportunity Rising), an agenda that calls out racism and discrimination where it exists and his plans to address it:

- Reducing infant mortality by making sure black babies reach their first birthday and beyond;
- Ensuring access to high-quality pre k, regardless of your zip code;
- Working to reduce evictions where we know black mothers are disproportionately impacted; and increasing the availability of affordable housing;
- Creating more opportunities for black owned and women owned businesses to have equal access to city contracts;
- Connecting residents to good paying careers in the trades; and
- Ensuring our residents feel safe wherever they go . . . including their interactions with police – because there is no greater inequity than the brutality that can happen at the hands of police officers.

## Fiscal Responsibility

Columbus again received AAA credit ratings with a stable outlook from all three major rating agencies.

## 2023 Accomplishments

- Hosted PCMA conference
- Announced expanded partnerships with the ATF and U.S. District Attorney to fight gun crimes in Columbus
- Appointed new director of ODI
- Appointed leader of the Office of Violence Prevention
- Received AAA bond rating
- Announced lien forgiveness program
- Announced application process for summer programming funding
- Announced stats from Operation Overdrive
- Broke ground on Parsons Solar
- Announced more than \$20 million in summer programming for Columbus youth
- Announced special safety initiatives for weekends in the Short North
- Announced weekly recycling pick-up
- Announced summer safety initiatives
- Hosted US Conference of Mayors conference
- Proposed \$1.74 billion Capital Budget
- Announced partnership with Be SMART/ NOBLE (The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives) to hand out gun locks to residents
- Opened renovated Windsor Pool
- Announced summer food program
- Announced "Reimagining Columbus," a \$3.5 million plan to transform the city's commemorative landscape to more fully celebrate the diversity and multiplicity of our city
- Opened renovated Glenwood Pool
- Announced Columbus as a workforce hub
- Launched Phase I of new Columbus.gov website
- Received federal safety grant for recruitment
- Announced three new drop-off locations that collect food waste for composting
- Announced \$2 million in funding for the Success Bridge program at Columbus State Community College
- Extended Operation Moonlight to the end of the year
- Held gun buyback event, collection over 300 guns
- Kicked off Eastland Revitalization Plan process
- Announced medical debt relief
- Announced design of Columbus Sports Park at Kilbourne Run

- Began demolition of Carolyn Avenue facilities for RTC
- Gave \$1 million to LSS CHOICES
- Presented operating budget
- Allocated \$15 million for digital access

# **Department of Technology**

## **2023 Annual Report**

The Department of Technology (DOT) supports the local government information infrastructure by providing uninterrupted, secure, and reliable information systems that touch both internal and external customers.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Department of Technology plans, designs, develops, procures, and delivers Citywide information technology, telecommunications, and media services in partnership with City departments, City elected offices, boards and commissions, and other governmental entities. DOT works to achieve this mission by adhering to four pillars of customer satisfaction; Customer-Centered Thinking; Value-Driven through Leading Change; Collaboration and Partnership; and Continual Improvement.

### **CUSTOMER-CENTERED THINKING & VALUE-DRIVEN THROUGH LEADING CHANGE**

DOT understands that without our customers, namely Columbus elected officials, other City departments, and ultimately the public, we have no reason to exist. The services we provide empower the business of government, that the world of technology is constantly changing, and to be successful, we must adapt and embrace change. As we have continued to modernize post-pandemic, we are seeing an increase in technology investment across City departments, especially in Public Safety, Recreation and Parks, Public Utilities, and Public Service as they continue to modernize their operations to serve the public. We expect this trend to continue as departments increasingly turn to technology to serve the public directly.

DOT provides support for twelve essential services, including network, telecommunications, applications/programming services, desktop, IT security, GIS, and CTV-media services, six enterprise applications used by all City departments, and 54 major lines of business applications used by various departments, in addition to certain technology services to our external customers which include the Franklin County Board of Commissioners and Columbus City Schools.

Presented here are some of the 2023 accomplishments of the department. A continued balance of improving existing services and offering, implementing, and developing new technologies that help the City of Columbus meet the needs of residents while safeguarding and maximizing the tax dollars we are allotted and adhering to the core department pillars.

### **COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Dedicating resources, time, and effort to join other departments in building effective solutions that empower the business of our City. Collaboration and Partnership form the third pillar of customer satisfaction for DOT. In 2023, DOT partnered with City offices and departments on key public policy priorities.

The DOT **Applications** team manages and maintains applications used by City departments. In 2023, multiple applications underwent significant changes.

Application modernization accomplishments included the following:

- Assisted the Department of Utilities (DPU) with Citywide meter modernization for water, sewer, and electricity. Also upgraded DPU's document management system (Falcon) and implemented a new solution to store video recordings of sewer pipes and drains (GraniteNet).
- Collaborated with Building and Zoning Services (BZS), Department of Public Services (DPS), and DPU to perform a significant upgrade for the enterprise system for permitting (Accela).
- Upgraded Business Objects and Crystal reports, which provide application reporting for custom and commercial applications throughout the City. Also, created a portal to improve report access for DPU.
- Enhancements were added to the City's help desk system to automate frequent requests to save time and add capacity.
- Worked with the Departments of Public Safety and Public Health to launch a new website to increase awareness of the Alternate Crisis Response programs.
- Worked with the Department of Health on the annual upgrade for their data collection platform, REDCap.
- Updated application architecture for the City Council's application that allows lobbyists to register and update their information for the City.

In 2023, DOT implemented and continued refining an application support model emphasizing department/DOT partnership, vendor management and accountability, and risk mitigation. In 2024, DOT will continue to build out that model and embark on strategic applications lifecycle management.

Additional services and applications managed by the Applications team are:

- **City of Columbus Website** (columbus.gov): In 2023, Columbus.gov had over 3.8 million visitors and 12.7 million page views, with many accessing the site from a cellphone. The most visited pages were collection schedules, 311 services, utilities, bill payment, police media releases, and jobs. The DOT applications team and the Mayor’s Office communications team launched Columbus.gov on a new platform, and the first phase of migrations is complete. During this process, editors have reduced the number of pages by 85%, and the content has been restructured to make it easier for constituents to find what they need.
- **GovDelivery Communication** (columbus.gov/mycbus): On behalf of the Mayor’s Office, DOT continues to manage the GovDelivery non-emergency communication tool for use throughout the City enterprise. In 2023, 705 bulletins were distributed to over 8.8 million recipients. Today, there are 468,745 subscribers. The most popular topic among subscribers is the Civil Service Commission’s News & Events, with 15,296 subscriptions.

The **DOT Project Management Office**, which includes the Analysis, Acquisitions, and Projects teams, work with City departments to successfully plan, acquire, develop, and deploy technology solutions related to their most important priorities. DOT efforts include assistance in working with City departments on the following critical systems/projects:

- Real-Time Crime Center (a hub for dispatch services to utilize data collection and analysis to gather information and inform officers as quickly and efficiently as possible).
- Cybersecurity Risk Improvements (City-wide multi-phase assessment and action for cybersecurity policy, process, and controls improvement).
- 911 Dispatch Improvements (a new system with improved automation of scenario assessment and scripting for dispatcher/caller interaction).
- Labor Negotiation Cost Forecasting (a system to efficiently cost and measure the impact of labor negotiation proposals to our compensation and benefit packages, and a foundation for sound financial labor forecasting and planning).

## CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

As related to DOT’s fourth pillar of continual improvement, the department made enhancements to many of the standard e-commerce and business technology applications and services provided to internal customers and citizens.

**Columbus Government Television CTV** (Spectrum and WOW, channel 1024; AT&T, channel 99; youtube.com/cityofcolumbus; and WCBZ 22.6):

The award-winning CTV broadcasts live and recorded streaming media of City events to the public. In 2023 CTV produced 540 hours of video content, 245 social media and internal videos, with 90% of CTV’s coverage being simulcast to Facebook and/or YouTube. CTV continued working with Columbus City Schools to broadcast K-12 educational content for students who want to continue learning from home. DOT’s **Service Desk** continued to provide front-line incident response to the City’s most common IT problems end-user issues, and routes service requests and incident resolution internally within DOT. In 2023, DOT service desk staff received 59,591 service tickets and closed 59,530 tickets; equaling approximately 229 tickets closed per day.

The DOT **Client Services** team provides and supports City staff’s end-user tech, including desktops and laptops, telephones, call centers, audio/visual, e-facsimiles, and printing. In 2023, the Client Services Desktop Support team initiated the annual aged computer replacement program with a \$2 million budget—a 50% increase over 2022. This allowed the team to assist customers with replacing more aged equipment with more modern hardware to increase performance and efficiency. Also in 2023, Client Services, Telephone Support initiated the first phase of replacing Public Safety’s aged NEC Phone systems with the DOT standard Cisco Voice system equipment, allowing more functionality, Citywide standardization, and improved support. This effort will carry over into 2024.

DOT **Data and Analytic** services help City departments use data to understand and improve City services. The DOT Data Management team upgraded three major platforms in 2023, including Talend, the SQL Server-based Data Hub, and Tableau. The Data Management team also provided a total of eight new data application integrations for various departments, including Halogen; Data Ticket; Alternative Response, GraniteNet/Argon, ESO Fire Incidents and Properties, SmartSheet, and Tablet Command. Additionally, the Data Team’s Tableau group developed multiple dashboards, including WAM Archive, Ethics dashboard, and support for Water Consumption Report.

The DOT **Mapping or Geographic Information System (GIS)** team continued to provide digital mapping services to address Citywide needs. Projects included updates to enterprise GIS software and infrastructure to ensure long-term stability and continuity of vendor support and partnering with other DOT teams on the successful update and implementation of enterprise systems that integrate with GIS. The team also worked with the City Attorney’s office on a new application to track the potential adverse impact of degraded properties on their communities and assisted Development with the creation of a Hub site to promote their Zone-In initiative. The GIS team has also played a pivotal role in advancing Digital Equity initiatives by leveraging its skills in data analysis and application design.

The DOT **Database** team has implemented and/or assisted with migration and/or upgrade of several applications/databases in 2023, including Accela, SolarWinds, SQL Server, Income Tax, Matrix, LRA, LIMS Archive, DPU Personnel, Keytracer, Responder, Tokay, water consumption dashboard, GraniteNet/Argon, Fleet Fluid Control, Criminal History, MCM Radio, VIMS, EasyLobby, HVAC, and Jury Management.

DOT **Infrastructure** provides Citywide connectivity to the internet, and private cloud server and storage hosting solutions for City buildings and departments. In 2023, the Infrastructure team accomplished the following;

- Completed the SolarWinds Application Upgrade and implemented enhancements to improve server, network, and application monitoring capabilities, and completed enhancements to the virtual server environment, HCI Memory Upgrade, HCI Software Version Upgrade (VCF 3.X to 4.X), AVI Load Balancer Upgrade, and implemented Patch Maintenance program to ensure optimal and secure operations. Infrastructure also started planning for adding solar panels to the Datacenter West roof as part of the necessary roof replacement, which is expected to be completed in 2024.
- Migrated Columbus email mailboxes and Public Folders to an updated Microsoft Exchange environment. Infrastructure completed several enhancements to the City's internet service, including migration from a single firewall configuration to an active-passive architecture to provide redundancy to better avoid internet interruptions, upgraded our internet edge from 1 Gbps to 5 Gbps capability to allow faster access to the internet, decommissioned Police ASA firewall and ISP service, integrated internet traffic flow for CPD and Franklin County Municipal courts to the City's Internet Service Provider which allowed us to remove unneeded circuits and lower costs.
- Infrastructure completed the Meraki boundary network upgrade at 10 City locations, including 77 South Front, Columbus Public Health, City Hall, Jerry Hammond, Neighborhood Police Center, Hilltop Early Childhood Center, DPU Water Quality Lab, and Fire stations 1 and 9. Work will continue in 2024 with the completion of Franklin County Municipal Court, Police Headquarters, and Public Utilities on Dublin Road, and then will focus on the remaining fire stations.
- Infrastructure also supported several initiatives for City Departments, including the DPU Smart Street Lighting project phases 1 and 2, network integration of DPU's security camera system across multiple locations, provided network and fiber connectivity for the new Inspector General's office.

The DOT **Information Security** program manages cybersecurity solutions, continuously monitors and assesses cybersecurity threats, and responds to potential security incidents involving DOT-provided IT services.

Cybersecurity Monitoring and Incident response observed and evaluated over 170 billion events, including over 62 million inappropriate or unwanted communications prevented, over 200K cyber threats blocked by DOT defense-in-depth security protections, 9,116 notable security events assessed by Cybersecurity Analysts, 300 potential security incidents responded to by security analysts, and 34 security incidents contained and recovered. In 2023, the Information Security team laid the groundwork for Citywide cybersecurity assessment and remediation services. In order to provide needed technology services to City departments, DOT **Human Resources** successfully hired 32 new employees— a considerable accomplishment considering the challenging IT staffing landscape in Central Ohio. The IT industry is highly competitive right now, with national IT unemployment remaining well below the national average at just 2.3%. According to one well-respected industry source (Dice), in 2023, Columbus had the third fastest IT wage growth in the country—and the highest among urban cities in the Midwest.

DOT worked with City HR to do an analysis of where our employees fall in the market and have worked with job candidates to emphasize our City benefits and work-life balance in our recruitment efforts. DOT is also partnering with the Civil Service Commission to review and re-class outdated legacy language and classifications, as well as change some positions from tested to a non-competitive classification and have added language to pay for training and certifications. All of these changes will help promote our teams for recruitment and retention purposes. DOT is also taking a new approach to recognizing the need for staffing in other City departments. In partnership with Recreation and Parks (R&P), DOT helped hire staff who are assigned to R&P but remain DOT staff. DOT is also taking a similar approach with staffing at Public Safety and for other interested City departments. DOT thinks this approach creates a broader set of growth opportunities for City IT staff who may learn needed skills and abilities on the job at DOT before they are promoted to other opportunities working directly for City departments.

# **Department of Neighborhoods 2023 Annual Report**



## **2023 Department of Neighborhoods Annual Report**

The Department of Neighborhoods works from a foundation of devoted residents, committed neighborhood leaders, and a dedicated City workforce to solve community concerns and enhance each neighborhood. Delivering on Mayor Andrew J. Ginther’s commitment to every Columbus neighborhood, the Department is helping to build a stronger, more equitable Columbus, where everyone can prosper. Serving as the front door to the City, the Department of Neighborhoods empowers residents, responds to their needs, and protects their rights.

The work of the Department is fully aligned with Opportunity Rising, Mayor Ginther’s aspirations for every resident. Through alignment with Opportunity Rising, the Department is focused on advancing racial equity in our programming, how we deliver services, the make-up of our staff, and who we contract with.

The work of the Department contributes to nearly all of the 21 Opportunity Rising Rays and outcomes. The Department is specifically focused on supporting the achievement of three Rays.

The Neighborhood Liaisons, 311, Rise Up CBUS!, the New American Program, and the Community Relations Commission directly support the Community Collaboration Ray and its focus on residents collaborating with their city to create the community they wish to live in.

My Brother’s Keeper and the Commission on Black Girls contribute to the Youth Ray and the outcome that “Every young person can find safety and engagement in their neighborhood outside school hours.”

The Neighborhood Building Ray and its goal that “every neighborhood has the infrastructure greenspace and programs to support safe and healthy living” is supported by the neighborhood planning work in Linden, Hilltop, and Eastland and the 614 Beautiful grant program.

We are pleased to present the following highlights of our work in 2023.

### **311 CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER**

- *311 Customer Service Center:* Use of 311 remained high across all access points with more than 485,000 customer contacts. The use of the new CBUS 311 mobile app continued to grow. It was used more than 43,000 times in 2023, a 32% increase from nearly 33,000 contacts in 2022. The average time it took to answer a call during peak volume periods decreased in 2023 to 3 minutes and 17 seconds from 7 minutes and 11 seconds in 2022. The percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds increased to 60% in 2023. This is up from 44% in 2022.
- *Extended Hours:* 311 extended operating hours and is now open until 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Additional staff have been hired to process e-mail and voicemail requests from 8:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday.
- *System Enhancements:* Based on internal and external customer feedback, modifications were made to the system by the vendor to improve the customer experience.
- *311 Staff Pride Center Expansion:* 311 team members are now working from the North, South, East, and Far East Neighborhood Pride Centers. Residents may schedule an appointment to meet in person with 311 Service Representatives. An intensive onboarding process was developed to prepare new customer service representatives.
- *Increased Community Engagement:* Additional community engagement opportunities were introduced including a collaboration with the Korda Institute for Teaching led by students at Johnson Park Middle School, working with The Ohio State University Off-Campus and Commuter Student Engagement Office, and conducting a campaign with the community to boost 311 usage in Linden.

### **COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION (CRC)**

- *Community Engagement:* A four-month campaign occurred to educate residents in the Linden, Hilltop, and Eastland communities about the Community Relations Commission's services. This included hosting educational sessions. A Facebook page was also launched as well as paid ads to increase engagement and awareness. The ads reached over 200,000 Facebook users.
- *Advocacy in Action Conference:* The CRC launched a half-day forum focused on elevating community dialogue about disability, advocacy, and equity.
- *Discrimination Complaint Resolution:* The number of complaints and inquiries from residents increased in 2023. Employment discrimination was the area receiving the most complaints.

## **MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION**

- *Awareness Building:* The Department’s social media presence increased significantly with over 4,000 followers on Facebook. On Instagram, the Department gained 461 new followers, a 265% increase since 2022.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD LIAISONS AND NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE CENTERS**

- *Area Commission Elections:* For the second year, Citywide Area Commission Elections were held. Social media was used to enhance awareness of the 11 Commissions that participated.
- *Commissioner Training:* The Department hosted 12 Area Commission Trainings and two new in-person networking sessions. These sessions allowed Commissioners to learn from one another while also hearing from city leaders, departments, and community partners.
- *Community Engagement:* Liaisons created multiple new opportunities for residents to engage with City resources. For example, the South Neighborhood Pride Center hosted monthly Coffee and Conversations that averaged 20 people per meeting. At the Far East Center, monthly Pride Team lunches were held with Area Commissioners, civic leaders, and city and community resources.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING**

### **One Linden Plan**

- Plan Re-Engagement:
  - After launching 2018, the Department re-engaged the Linden community around the One Linden Community Plan’s 10 Big Ideas. The approach included in-person events, an online survey, and starting the “One Linden Advisory Committee” to ensure that the core pillars of the plan were being fulfilled.
- Multiple investments were made by the City of Columbus and the Department of Neighborhoods to advance the goals of the One Linden Plan.
  - *Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families (HNHF) Home Repair Program:* Healthy Homes, the affordable housing prong of Nationwide Children’s Hospital Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families initiative granted 60 home repair grants in the One Linden geography with City investment and other funding sources.
  - *One Linden Schools Initiative (OLSI):* The Department partnered with The Ohio State University, United Way of Central Ohio, and Columbus City Schools on OLSI to advance work that will improve student success, increase parent/family and community engagement, and help to address behavioral mental health issues among youth at Hamilton STEM and Windsor STEM Academies.
  - *St. Stephen’s Food and Nutrition Center (FNC) Delivery Program:* The FNC Delivery Program provides the distribution of food boxes (35-40 pounds per household) to those vulnerable residents who are unable to utilize services at a traditional food pantry due to a variety of reasons including a lack of transportation, physically disabled, lack of resources, or being homebound. The program runs five days a week, delivering food boxes to over 250 households per week.
  - *Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Rooms:* The Department partnered with Neighborhood Design Center and GetCr8v to create SEL rooms that will be completed in mid-2024 in Hamilton STEM and Windsor STEM. SEL rooms aim to enhance learning opportunities and encourage students to:
    - Understand and manage emotions
    - Feel and show empathy
    - Establish and maintain relationships
    - Make responsible decisions
    - Cool down and resolve conflicts

### **Envision Hilltop Plan**

- Continued Engagement
  - Hilltop-based stakeholders continue to work to implement the strategies outlined in the Envision Hilltop Plan through their leadership in the Envision Hilltop Advisory Committee and People, Place, and Home subcommittees.
- Multiple investments were made by the City of Columbus and the Department of Neighborhoods to advance the goals of the Envision Hilltop Plan. These included:
  - *Mid-Ohio Farm:* Approximately \$4.5 million in Community Development Block Grant funding was invested by the City to develop a “smart farm” seven-acre urban farm on Wheatland Avenue. Per the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, “The Farm will serve as

an innovative local destination. It features state-of-the-art agriculture, an educational training hub, fresh produce, and plenty of opportunities for community participation”.

- *Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Communal Areas*: The Department partnered with Neighborhood Design Center and GetCr8v to design a communal area at West High School that applies SEL principles. The goal of the space is to build a healthy community, reduce anxieties, and generate mindfulness among all school members.
- *Economic Development*: \$100,000 in seed funding was provided for the Hilltop Rise Economic Community Development Corporation which hired their first Executive Director in 2023. Hilltop Rise Economic Community Development Corporation is a non-profit Economic Community Development Corporation working to enhance the streetscapes along historic business corridors, preserve affordable commercial real estate, and attract businesses and customers to revitalize the neighborhood for the Greater Hilltop community.

### **Eastland Plan**

- MKSK was selected as the lead consultant for the development of the Eastland plan. The planning process kicked off during the summer and will continue for the next 16-18 months. Extensive community and stakeholder input will be used to develop a comprehensive community plan that will guide future community development in the Eastland area.

### **NEW AMERICAN PROGRAM**

- *Language Access*: Provided support for the implementation of the City’s language access code through a pilot program with Language Line to provide on demand interpretation services for all departments and by providing in-person interpretation as well as translation services for written materials.
- *New American Leadership Academy (NALA)*: The 2023 NALA class included 19 individuals who completed a service project focused on helping new Americans with the citizenship process.
- *NALA Jr.*: In partnership with the Columbus Global Academy, 30 freshmen and sophomore students were engaged in learning sessions focused on leadership development. The program expanded to include juniors and seniors from Columbus International High School during the 2023-2024 school year.
- *NALA Alumni Annual Summit*: The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual NALA Alumni Summit provided an opportunity for program alumni to network and continue their professional development with sessions focused on small business, non-profit organization best practices, and civic engagement training focused on functional community integration.

### **RISE UP/MOBILE CITY HALL**

- *Rise Up CBUS*: The program continued for the second year with 11 communities hosting a Rise Up event. A 12<sup>th</sup> event was canceled because of severe weather. More than 75 City departments and community resource organizations participated.
- *Mobile City Hall*: With 50 community events in 2023, demand for Mobile City Hall was high. The request process was streamlined with the use of a new request form.
- *Colonial Village Response*: The team supported the Haitian migrants living at Colonial Village by gathering and distributing hundreds of coats and blankets to residents.
- *Roll Bike Partnership*: Nearly 80 gently used bikes were given to local organizations.

### **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT – MY BROTHER’S KEEPER AND COMMISSION ON BLACK GIRLS**

#### **Commission on Black Girls**

- *Community Advisory Board*: The Commission established a Community Advisory Board to guide the implementation of projects that address issues concerning systemic racism and support the recommendations in *A Report on the Quality of Life of Black Girls in Columbus, Ohio*. The Community Advisory Board will begin launching projects in 2024.
- *Community Partners*: The Commission partners with many organizations by providing funding, resources, or other support for programs that serve Black girls including Actions that Matter for Youth, Brown Girls Mentoring, Eryn PiNK, LEAD with Purpose Academy, and the Thioassane Institute.
- *Youth Programming*: The Commission joined MBK to engage over 370 youth through employment program opportunities that supported skill development in areas such as content creation, videography, and fashion.
- *My Hair, My Crown*: This new initiative launched in 2023 to empower black girls by addressing appearance pressures and stereotypes and promoting self-expression. In its inaugural year, My Hair, My Crown was offered to five organizations and two schools serving 110 girls.
- *Community Engagement*: Major events sponsored by COBG consisted of the Hair Story Crown Act Event, The Little Mermaid Movie showing, the Say My Name Event (in partnership with Columbus City Schools), and the Black Women’s Equal Pay Day & Pay Equity

Signing Event (jointly sponsored with the Columbus Women’s Commission). Collectively these events reached over 500 girls and women sharing information on relevant issues for Black girls.

### **My Brother’s Keeper Village**

- *New Research:* MBK renewed its partnership with Ohio State University’s Kirwan Institute to conduct an updated “Youth of Color Needs Assessment and MBK Program Impact Study” that will help to chart the future path of the MBK work.
- *National Recognition:* In 2023, MBK Village was one of 27 communities across the country to achieve Entry Level Certification from the My Brother's Keeper Alliance through the Obama Foundation. Certification is achieved by building a collective impact infrastructure aligned with the MBK Equity Framework. As a result of achieving "certification" status our chapter was recognized at the 2023 Democracy Forum. As a component of this recognition, we can receive technical assistance to support and learn from other MBK models across the U.S.
- *Summer Youth Employment and Programming:* MBK developed a city-wide process for the solicitation of proposals for summer youth employment and programming. 90 organizations were awarded funding totaling \$20.1 million.
  - Key program successes included:
    - 374 students awarded internships
    - 3012 enrolled in programming
    - 123 students attended the NO LIMIT Entrepreneur Summit featuring Master P

### **EVENTS**

- *Neighborhood Best Practices Conference:* The annual Neighborhood Best Practices Conference focused on health and equity. Over 250 people attended. A keynote address from Dr. Mysheika W. Roberts focused on the link between reducing health disparities and having safe and affordable housing, education, employment and healthy food choices. More than a dozen community partners shared relevant resources. A new group of 20 under 20 youth were recognized for their community service and Sudarshan Pyakurel, Executive Director of the Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio (BCCO), received the 2023 Dan Charles Award.
- *MLK Oratorical Contest:* More than 40 local students in grades K-12 participated in the contest at CCAD’s Canzani Center. Winners will compete in the Statewide MLK Oratorical Contest in April of 2024.
- *MLK March and Celebration:* The annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. March and Celebration was held at the Lincoln Theatre. Speakers included Mayor Andrew J. Ginther, faith leaders, and winners from the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Oratorical Contest.

### **STAFF DIVERSITY AND PURCHASING**

- *Staff:* The staff of the Department reflected the community we serve. In 2023, 29 members of the team self-identified as black, 17 as white, three as Hispanic, one as Asian, and two as biracial.
- *Spending:* The Department continued to work with a diverse group of vendors in 2023. Our spend on professional services was \$1,209,153.00 of which \$748,154.00 or 62% was allotted to minority and women business enterprises (MBE & WBE) who have completed the City of Columbus’ Minority Business Registration (MBR) process.

# **Department of Finance and Management 2023 Annual Report**

The Department of Finance and Management is organized into three operational groups: Financial Management, Asset Management, and Procurement. Financial Management oversees city-wide operating and capital budget development, as well as grants management and fiscal monitoring and control. Asset Management manages city owned real estate, facilities management, construction project management, and fleet management, which maintains vehicles for most city agencies. Procurement oversees the central Purchasing Office and provides general oversight and advisory functions related to the City's purchasing activities. The Director's Office provides overall coordination and policy direction for the Department's fiscal, human resources, and legislative processing functions, and oversees the City's procurement, construction pre-qualification, print shop, and mailroom functions.

Within the Financial Management Group is the Division of Financial Management, which includes the Budget, Debt Management, and Grants Management operations. Within the Asset Management Group are the Divisions of Facilities Management and Fleet Management, Office of Construction Management, and Office of Real Estate Management. Within Procurement is the Purchasing Office and Construction Prequalification.

The 2023 highlights are as follows:

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT GROUP

### Budget Management

The primary function of the Budget Management Office is to provide fiscal analyses in the preparation and monitoring of the annual operating budget so that City leaders have useful, accurate, and timely financial information from which to make informed decisions.

The 2023 budget was adopted by City Council on February 13, 2023 and was signed by the Mayor on February 15, 2023. A year-end report of 2022 financials was also issued in the first quarter of 2023, comparing overall 2022 revenues and expenditures to 2021 levels, as well as to the projections in the 2022 third quarter financial report. Ten-year pro forma operating statements for the general fund and for most major operating funds were updated, and a monthly general fund revenue report was compiled that compared revenues to the previous year's receipts, as well as to the City Auditor's estimate.

Through the end of 2023, the city has received approximately \$187 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Fund relief from the federal government, as well as \$130 million in Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) relief. As such, the Budget Management Office assisted in the management, allocation, tracking, and reporting of these funds. A new Federal Grants section was created within the Director's Office in 2022 to oversee the administration of Federal Covid-relief funding. In addition, the Budget Management Office completed various special projects in partnership with other city agencies, including, among others, the following: served on various RFP committees; produced and compiled forecasts for the 2023 County Tax Budget; and continued support of the Mayor's goals and initiatives.

The Mayor's 2024 Recommended Budget was presented to the public and City Council on November 9th in conformity with provisions in the City Charter. Building upon the redesign work of the past several years, the 2024 document included several enhancements to better communicate and engage stakeholders. Additionally, the Mayor's 2024 Budget included a \$2.75 million deposit into the rainy day fund, which will bring the ending fund balance to \$101.4 million by the end of 2024. This will keep the city on schedule to meet the Mayor's established rainy day fund goal of \$114 million by the end of 2027. The City was able to meet its previous goal of \$90 million (by the end of 2024), two years ahead of schedule.

### Debt Management

The Debt Management Office oversees the coordination of the Capital Improvements Budget (the CIB) and the six-year Capital Improvements Program (the CIP). The office coordinated the preparation of the 2023 Capital Improvements Budget and the 2023-2028 Capital Improvements Program. In May, the city issued \$421.1 million in General Obligation bonds related to the 2022 Capital Improvements Budget and \$21.6 million in General Obligation refunding bonds. In February and June, the city issued \$161 thousand and \$382 thousand in street lighting assessment notes, respectfully, to begin work on two new street lighting projects. In November, the city issued a \$20.7 million Limited Tax note to continue to fund a new City-owned parking garage related to the Scioto Peninsula Development.

The City has a current long-term general obligation bond credit ratings of AAA by S&P Global Ratings, Aaa by Moody's Investors Service, and AAA by Fitch Ratings, Inc. .

#### Grants Management

The Grants Management Section is responsible for program management and compliance for various federal grant programs from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Program, the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and the HOME Investment Partnerships American Rescue Plan Program (HOME-ARP). The Grants Management Section also continues to manage the remaining federal COVID-relief funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, including CDBG-CV, ESG-CV, and HOPWA-CV.

In 2023, the Grants Management Section:

- Received HUD's approval of the 2023 Annual Action Plan which outlines how the City will invest a \$15,860,371 of federal grant funds.
- Received approval from HUD on the City's HOME-ARP Allocation Plan, allowing the City to begin allocating over \$16,000,000 to affordable housing development projects and supportive services projects for qualifying populations.
- Solicited project proposals for the use of 2024 CDBG funding. This included holding a public workshop to provide an overview of CDBG regulations; reviewing 34 pre-application submissions and providing technical assistance comments; holding a second public workshop to release the FY 2024 CDBG grant application and assist prospective applicants in refining project ideas and preparing for application submission; and holding five public workshops at local libraries to allow prospective applicants to receive assistance and technical support in person. In total, the Grants Management Section served 94 members of the public through these workshops and received more than 50 applications for funding consideration in 2024.
- Hosted a Bus Tour with City staff and external partners to highlight impactful HUD-funded projects in Columbus.
- Submitted an application to HUD for \$10,000,000 under the Pathways to Removing Obstacles (PRO) Housing grant program.
- Administered \$500,000 from the State of Ohio CDBG-CV program to fund capacity and operations of a local non-profit.
- Managed 15 community-based projects.
- Coordinated 7 City department projects.
- Drafted the 2024 Annual Action Plan which outlines how the City will implement an estimated \$15,800,000 of federal grant funds.

#### Purchasing Office

The Purchasing Office is responsible for the procurement of goods and services, including the administration of the city's procurement policies and procedures. Additionally, the Construction Prequalification team resides within the Purchasing Office and pre-qualifies potential construction bidders and specific sub-contractors who receive or perform construction service work for the City of Columbus. They perform this function by pre-qualifying licensed construction trade contractors seeking to perform any portion of work on city construction projects and to administer a prequalification process through the fair and equitable evaluation of business entities seeking to do construction business with the city. In 2023, the Construction Prequalification team assisted over 215 vendors become or continue to be construction pre-qualified.

2023 highlights include:

- Re-bid 85 Universal Term Contracts, 81 formal one-time buys, and 407 informal bids.
- Continued to maintain the Vendor Services vendor portal, helping serve thousands of businesses who interact with the City.
- Consulted on various high profile projects in other City agencies, including the safety officers recruiting contract, the Treasurer's banking services contract, and the City Attorney's Project Taillight to assist poor residents with car repairs.
- Organized a new model for procuring furniture, leading to broader selection, and faster delivery times for commercial interior space design.
- Provided direction city-wide in agencies' implementation of new Responsible Wage requirements established by Council.
- Managed and maintained over 450 Universal Term Contracts with millions of items within the catalog. Last year, the total number of purchase orders created from the catalog was 43,579.

#### ASSET MANAGEMENT GROUP

##### Construction Management

The Construction Management Office provides building construction and renovation project management. Construction Management is also responsible for Energy Management.

2023 highlights include:

- Completed design and construction of the pavement for the Adventure Center Parking Lot.
- Started design for the Pre-K Parking Lot.
- Completed design for the Impound Lot Pavement Replacement project.
- Advertised Architect-of-Record services for the Easton Police Substation project.

- Advertised Architect-of-Record services for the Facilities Management Division Warehouse (aka Groves Rd./Toys R Us)
- Kicked off design for the Public Safety Campus project.
- Completed design for the new Fire Station 36 project.
- Completed design and began construction for the Fire Training Academy HVAC Chiller Replacement project.
- Rebid and selected a contractor for the Gladden House HVAC Systems Replacement project.
- Completed design for the Fire Station 24 Female Facilities Renovation project.
- Awarded the design and CMAR contracts for the New Municipal Court Building project.
- Started preliminary design for the New Municipal Court Building project.
- Completed construction of the interior renovations at the North Market Building
- Completed construction of the City Hall Council Chambers Phase 2 project.
- Started design for the new security desks at 77 & 111 N. Front St.
- Designed and constructed the CDBG Facilities Renovation projects: The Refuge, Reeb Ave. Center, and Star House.
- Designed the CDBG ‘All That’ and ‘Carol Stewart Village’ Facilities Renovation projects.
- Procured and completed design development for Police Sub #19
- Completed design and construction of the Carolyn Ave Demolition project.
- Advertised and completed 10% of construction on the Health 3rd & 4th Floor Renovation project.
- Completed construction of the Georgesville Refuse Station Phase 1 project.
- Completed design and advertised construction for the Roof Repair project.
- Completed construction of the Reeb Ave. Boiler Replacement project.
- Completed design for the Fire Station #16 Demolition project.
- Advertised & awarded the Columbus Public Health Elevators project.
- Completed design of the Columbus Pubic Health North Dorm Elevator Modernization project.
- Completed Energility Retro-Commissioning Phase 2A & developed Phase 2B
- Secured new contract for retail supply broker for AEP Ohio accounts via RFSQ process; proposed renewable % goals and REC composition for now thru 2030

#### Real Estate Management Office

The Real Estate Management Office provides centralized management and stewardship of all real property used in City operations (other than rights-of-way and utility easements) to ensure effective utilization of real property assets, increase efficiency, reduce operational costs, and generate revenue and serves as a resource to all City entities for real estate information and research.

The Real Estate Management Office (REMO) administers lease agreements, negotiates leases, acquires property for use in City operations, disposes of surplus property, and oversees utilization of building space. REMO is responsible for managing, safeguarding, and maintaining centralized records of all city-owned property, leases, deeds and other instruments as evidence of title. REMO administers the payment of real estate taxes on non-exempt or partially exempt City-owned property, CAUV tax reduction filings, and assists the City Attorney’s Office in filing requests for exemption from real estate taxes for City-owned property. In addition, REMO administers the City’s risk insurance programs, evaluates risk exposure and acquires cost-effective insurance coverage for aviation, property casualty, stored vehicles, boilers, and general and excess liability to protect city assets and minimize financial exposure from a casualty loss.

#### 2023 highlights include:

- Partnering with Public Utilities and City Attorney’s Office completed two leases for the City’s first solar farms, the first, on a portion of the Parsons Avenue Water Plant and the second, on a portion of the Jackson Wastewater Treatment Facility that was formerly a landfill.
- Acquired two (2) sites for future construction projects - parking for the Hilltop Early Learning Center and a shaft and laydown area for the Williams and Castle Sewer Interceptor Project.
- Acquired a former retail site for renovation and construction of offices and storage for the Facilities Management Division and Division of Police.
- Managed fifteen (16) expense and forty-one (41) income leases and licenses.
- Issued an RFP for city-wide vending and micro-market services and completed a contract for services at four micro-markets and twenty-one vending locations.
- Provided management oversight for 1,065 city-owned properties in located in six (6) counties.
- Maintained the GIS layer of city-owned properties updating 458 records for approximately three hundred seventy (370) locations.
- Administered the receipt and deposit of approximately \$2.012 million in income from the lease of City properties to third parties and prepared approximately \$1 million in rent payments for the lease of properties to meet city operational needs creating approximately 650 postings of lease related financial transactions.
- Issued a RFSQ for a best value proposal and completed a contract for the purchase of Commercial Interior Space Design Services and Furniture Procurement Services.
- Implemented and managed ten interior design/furniture projects for offices of the Mayor, Public Safety, City Council, City Auditor, Public Safety, Recreation and Parks and Finance and Management.



- Completed the annual review of City’s current insurance program and coverages, broadened and adjusted coverages, and shopped premiums. Implemented the binding of casualty insurance coverage for general property and utility plants and stored vehicles, aviation coverage, boiler and machinery coverage, and general and excess liability insurance coverage for the term August 1, 2023 through July 31, 2024 to protect city assets and minimize financial exposure from a casualty loss.
- Issued an RFP for insurance brokerage and risk management services for the city’s risk insurance programs for the five year period 2024-2029.

#### Facilities Management

The Facilities Management Division provides maintenance, custodial, and security services to over one hundred and four (104) city buildings. That covers over 3.1 million square feet of space, part of which includes a 10.4 acre downtown municipal campus. Facilities Management is also responsible for the upkeep of thirty-five (35) fire stations, the Division of Fire administrative complex and practical skills building, as well as the training academy. The division also provides services to twenty eight (28) police facilities including the Police Headquarters and the Police Training Academy. Other buildings and facilities include the Division of Refuse Collection, Columbus Public Health, 1393 East Broad Street, the I-71 complex, the Public Safety/Public Service Impound-Parking Violation complex, and the management and oversight for the 1111 East Broad Street, The Pre-K, The Jerry Hammond Complex, and the Municipal Court Building. With a few exceptions, the Facilities Management Division is responsible for: general/preventative maintenance, limited renovation to existing buildings, custodial services, landscaping (19 acres), and snow removal (25 acres). Additionally, the Security section patrols and monitors the downtown municipal campus and monitor systems and access to other municipal facilities across departments. The Security section also administrates access controls for the division and other departments.

2023 highlights include:

- Maintenance section complete 12,803 work orders during 2023, averaging 1,067 work orders completed per month.
- Renovations and facility upgrades at FS 4, FS 7, FS 11, FS 15, FS 22, FS 24, FS 26FS 28, FS 35, FTA
- Exterior lighting and perimeter fencing, and electrical upgrades at Impound Lot
- Electrical upgrades at Police property room
- HVAC system upgrades at 1410 Cleveland Ave.
- Renovations and facility upgrades at Columbus Public Health
- City Hall Mayor’s media room
- City Hall suite 105 renovations
- City Hall room 241 renovations
- City Hall suite 301 Glass conference room
- Renovations and facility upgrades at 1393 E Broad
- Elwood Head start New HVAC

#### Fleet Management

The Fleet Management Division maintains most of the City's motorized equipment, assists in the acquisition and disposal of fleet assets, develops vehicle utilization and replacement policies, and operates the city’s vehicle pool and shuttle bus services.

2023 highlights include:

- Fleet Management achieved ASE Blue Seal certification for the 16th year in a row and remained an Elite Fleet in the public sector industry as named by Government Fleet magazine
- In late 2023, Fleet partnered with Utilimarc, a leading fleet analytics software company, to develop a GHG Emissions Dashboard. This dashboard will track the impact of our various alternative fuel vehicles on fuel use and cost as well as GHG emissions, and will assist in tracking our progress towards carbon neutrality by 2050 in accordance with Mayor Ginther’s Climate Action Plan
- Fleet auctions continued to bring in significant revenue, even with only two auctions held for the year. Total annual proceeds were almost \$1,651,000 from 328 items auctioned
- A new tire changing machine was installed in the Tire shop and two sets of mobile column lifts were added to the West Truck shop, both to increase efficiency in the shops
- Fleet continued to offer trainings to both internal staff as well as outside agencies and the public including ASE testing, the first on site EVT testing, CNG certification testing, and CDL training to increase the number of mechanics with commercial driver licenses.

# **Department of Public Health 2023 Annual Report**

Columbus Public Health protects the health and improves the lives of nearly 1 million Columbus and Worthington residents through more than 50 diverse public health programs. Columbus Public Health provides critical services to the community, such as restaurant inspections, STI testing and treatment, women’s health and wellness services, newborn home visiting, immunizations, and much more. Together with our community partners, we also are working to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in our community, reduce disparities to achieve health equity, address the overdose epidemic, reduce infant deaths, prepare for and respond to emergencies, address the social determinants of health such as housing, healthy foods and education, reduce chronic diseases, and increase access to affordable health care. Columbus Public Health is a nationally-accredited leader that identifies health priorities, mobilizes resources and ensures the conditions in which all residents can be healthy and safe.

Highlights of our work in 2023 to protect and serve the public include:

#### Alcohol and Drug Services

- Engaged 811 clients with 584 participating in outpatient and intensive outpatient group therapies.
- Served 51 people through the Medication Assisted Treatment program and provided 13 people with mental health “bridge” medications while waiting to be seen by a mental health professional.
- Served 2,403 clients through Safe Point, which dispensed 1,011,222 needles and collected 842,740 needles.
- Collected 56.79 pounds of medication and 40 pounds of sharps, needles and lancets at two drug take back events.
- Distributed 22,910 fentanyl test strips through Project LIFE at community outreach and partner locations.
- Provided naloxone trainings, education and harm reduction strategies to 5,254 residents and distributed 6,775 boxes of naloxone.
- Provided alcohol and drug prevention education to 4,104 residents at 51 community sites.
- Provided HIV/Hep C/STI education and harm reduction strategies to 3,251 residents.
- Provided prevention education programming in 28 Columbus City Schools.
- Provided prevention programming in 15 Columbus Recreation and Parks Centers.
- Served 2,460 young people through prevention programming.
- Operated four harm reduction vending machines in community locations with 498 registered users, providing 1,298 condoms, 1,745 fentanyl test strips, 225 pregnancy tests, and 316 naloxone kits.

#### Center for Public Health Innovation

- Hired the first full-time staff Spanish interpreter to serve our clients.
- Hosted the Mental Health Literacy Conference for 243 attendees to increase awareness of and address barriers to mental health services.
- Hosted the Oral Health Literacy Panel for 139 attendees to improve and increase access to oral health care from a policy perspective.
- Served 8,345 community members through over 62 community events.
- Recognized Minority Health month, serving 1,252 community residents, collaborating with 23 community organizations and organizing 17 initiatives.
- Held seven CLAS Cultural Competency Trainings centered on the African American, LatinX, and LGBTQ+ communities

#### Columbus and Franklin County Addiction Plan

- Distributed 23,617 naloxone kits, harm reduction materials and resources at the Arnold Classic, ComFest, Columbus PRIDE, Red, White and BOOM! and other events.
- Conducted 456 agency and community organization trainings on harm reduction and naloxone.
- Held the fifth annual Walk in for Recovery, serving 816 individuals with alcohol and drug treatment services, medical care, emergency medical detoxification, and other social services.
- Provided harm reduction materials during the community recognition event for International Overdose Awareness Day.
- Decreased the number of overdose deaths in Columbus and Franklin County by 20% from 2022 to 2023\* (Preliminary report.)

#### Columbus CARE Coalition

- Hosted the Annual Remembrance Vigil at the Franklin Park Conservatory for over 80 family members who had been impacted by violence.
- Offered support and resource linkage to 141 families of homicide victims.
- Completed 41 neighborhood canvasses, connecting with 202 community members and sharing literature on trauma with 725 homes.

- Shared 22 grief baskets with families to help ease their suffering.
- Trained 859 people in trauma-responsive care.

#### Dental

- Provided services at 126 schools and 19 recreation centers.
- Screened 7,925 children for dental sealants in schools and recreation centers.
- Placed 19,941 dental sealants on children's teeth in schools and recreation centers.
- Provided 404 oral health education/sugar sweetened beverage presentations.

#### Disease Prevention

- Treated 95,898 acres for adult mosquitoes, conducted 1,157 inspections of larviciding sites, inspected 12,268 catch basins, and RAMP tested 820 pools of mosquitoes to prevent mosquito-borne diseases.
- Completed 1,841 rat assessments of residential properties.

#### Epidemiology

- Conducted analyses and produced two comprehensive reports on reportable infectious diseases and violence to help guide our services.
- Created two new public interactive dashboards for Tobacco21 and Alternative Crisis Response programs and revamped the Infant Mortality dashboard to increase transparency and provide critical information to the public.
- Updated four other dashboards, including Key Community Health Indicators, Overdose and Addiction, Seasonal Influenza, and COVID-19 to provide updated data and resources to the community and partners.
- Contributed mapping and other analyses to inform the development of the Undesign the Redline program and the Healthy Children and Safe Homes by 2040 lead free initiative.
- Edited and updated the Columbus & Franklin County Addiction Plan online hub site to display plan metrics, resources from the subcommittees, and upcoming events to better inform partners and the community.

#### Food Protection

- Conducted 11,297 routine and follow-up inspections of 6,724 food facilities.
- Educated 584 participants in food safety.

#### Infectious Disease Investigation

- Investigated 4,976 disease reports.
- Received 22,571 reports of COVID.

#### Laboratory

- Performed 60,166 in-house tests on site, including: 2,296 drug screens; 2,464 clients for Hepatitis C; 7,232 clients for HIV; and 7,432 clients for syphilis.

#### Linden Anti-Violence

- Served 15 clients in the Linden area who were vulnerable to violence and retaliation.
- Held a Unity BBQ attended by over 100 residents and 11 community organizations.
- Completed seven canvasses in the Linden area to increase awareness of violence and its root causes such as drug trafficking.
- Distributed 119 lock boxes at community events.

#### Living After Loss

- Launched a peer support program to support families after violent loss.
- Developed procedures and hired staff to launch and implement program.

#### Maternal Child Health

- Distributed 1,644 car seats to 1,259 eligible families.
- Inspected 517 car seats for proper installation and facilitated 25 community car seat check events.
- Provided education and lock boxes to store potential lethal means to 1,662 families through 12 local partnerships.
- Participated in 59 community events and directly reached 1,535,451 people and indirectly reached 2,245,888 people with messaging supporting safe road use.
- Distributed 2,175 cribs for infants without a safe sleep surface to help reduce infant mortality.
- Trained 1,190 Safe Sleep Ambassadors through 75 trainings.
- Reviewed 48 Fetal-Infant Mortality Review cases and conducted 16 maternal interviews.
- Released the 2022 Fetal-Infant Mortality Annual Report to the Community Action Team and other stakeholders.
- Held a Light the Path for Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness event on National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day to raise awareness.
- Completed 6,752 home-based visits for pregnant and newly parenting families.

#### Mobile Crisis Response

- Responded to 2,600 top issue service runs for mental health, mental health follow-up, suicide attempt, check on wellbeing and civil disputes.
- Completed 855 transports to higher levels of care.
- Secured funding for unmarked cars.
- Hired two clinicians to ensure all units are operating at full capacity.

#### Neighborhood Environmental Health

- Initiated investigations of 100% of all cases of children with elevated blood lead levels by contacting the parents or guardians within state recommended guidelines.
- Worked with property owners, tenants and the City Attorney's Office to ensure lead properties were secured to prevent lead poisoning, and followed up on lead enforcement cases.
- Issued 824 Retail Tobacco and Paraphernalia Sales Licenses, and conducted 1,919 underage buy attempts with a compliance rate of 78%.
- Completed 415 sign checks to ensure compliance with Tobacco 21.
- Conducted 593 school safety inspections.

#### Neighborhood Social Work

- Fielded Social Work Helpline calls from 1,465 residents requesting assistance.
- Provided crisis services to the Latitude 525, Tall Oaks and Colonial Village apartment complexes in partnership with the Department of Development and Code Enforcement.
- Received 671 referrals for social work assistance.
- Delivered brief case management services to 981 community members.

#### Office of Emergency Preparedness:

- Distributed over 130,000 COVID-19 test kits to the community directly and through agency partnerships.
- Provided over 100,000 protective masks, gowns and medical materials to health care and community agencies.
- Distributed over 1,100 doses of mpox vaccine to health care providers.

#### One Block at a Time

- Engaged over 35 block residents on Myrtle Avenue over a 14 month period.
- Created a HOPE plan with residents to improve health and wellbeing, relieve strain and build resilience on the block.
- Provided emergency assistance for residents of the block to remove strain, including helping several families avoid eviction, repairing their transportation, receiving health services, and getting a new refrigerator.
- Hosted a number of events with block leaders and residents to clean up the alley and the block, plant flowers, and install motion activated solar backyard lighting.
- Outbreak Response
- Conducted 123 outbreak investigations to protect the public's health - the most since the Outbreak Response Program was created in 2009.
- Investigated 51 COVID-19 outbreaks and 72 additional outbreaks of 25 infectious diseases, including: 11 hand, foot and mouth disease; 10 Norovirus gastroenteritis; five legionellosis; four influenza; three pertussis; two mpox; one cyclosporiasis; one Hepatitis A; and, the first ever Candida auris infection and Mycobacterium abscessus infection.

#### ReRoute

- Provided 5,249 gun lock boxes to residents as part of the Locks Saves Lives initiative.
- Provided intensive wraparound services for 21 youth and their families.
- Completed 74 Next of Kin (non-fatal) calls with Columbus Police to provide outreach and support for youth who could benefit from ReRoute services and other resource referrals.

#### ReRoute Family Engagement

- Launched program in October 2023 and the team is fully staffed.
- Received 30 family referrals.
- Secured parent and mentoring staff along with an etiquette coach.

#### Right Response Unit

- Answered 4,499 top issue type calls for mental health, suicide attempt, check on wellbeing, mental health follow-up, and domestic violence.
- Completed one year of program operations with two shifts (8:30 a.m.-midnight).

- Developed educational materials in different languages and social media content to increase community education and awareness.

#### Sexual Health and Wellness Center

- Completed 6,618 visits.
- Initiated HIV PrEP (Pre-exposure prophylaxis) for 89 residents.
- Established walk-in services for mpox testing and vaccines.

#### Sexual Health Promotion

- Developed Ryan White HIV Care national standards and guidance documentation for Rapid Antiretroviral Treatment (Rapid ART), a method of getting HIV+ patients on medications immediately after diagnosis.
- Worked to prevent congenital syphilis, preventing 119 cases of congenital syphilis.
- Followed up on all infectious syphilis diagnoses to assure treatment for persons and preventive treatment for their partners, investigating 1,368 cases with 85% of cases starting treatment within 14 days, and preventively treating 85 people to stop the spread of infection.
- Followed-up on all persons newly diagnosed with HIV, linking 77% to HIV care and re-engaged 107 people back in to HIV care.
- Conducted the Know HIV No Fear and the Syphilis Outbreak Get Tested campaigns to educate and create awareness for communities most impacted by syphilis and HIV, with 3,648,906 impressions for syphilis and more than 7 million impressions for HIV.

#### Strategic Nursing Team

- Provided 512 vaccines to homebound clients unable to leave their homes.
- Hosted Stop the Bleed training for Public Utilities and Recreation and Parks.
- Provided Narcan training to partners throughout the greater Columbus area.
- Planned and implemented 18 Nursing Professional Development courses for Columbus Public Health nurses and external community partners.
- Partnered with Nationwide Children's Hospital and the Ohio Department of Health to host the Ohio Healthy Homes Network conference on lead prevention in homes.
- Provided 131 school-based vaccination clinics and 69 community vaccination clinics.
- Offered all-vaccine clinics for Columbus City Schools with the highest student exclusion rates.

#### TB

- Tested 1,999 high TB-risk students.
- Provided 2,411 home-based patient visits and 13,594 electronic directly observed therapy encounters.
- Provided medical care and case management for 131 TB disease patients, with 58 new cases pending confirmation.
- Initiated TB evaluation for 142 newly arrived refugees and immigrants, including 819 evacuees from Ukraine, of which 42 are on treatment for latent TB infection and three completed treated for TB disease.

#### Vaccine Preventable Disease

- Administered 25,654 vaccines to 9,232 clients.
- Successfully case-managed all 190 reported cases of perinatal hepatitis B infection in pregnant women to ensure zero transmission to their newborn babies.

#### Violent Crime Review Group

- Achieved 76% of homicides in VCRG areas were solved by Columbus Police.
- Completed 27 conference calls to review critical information on homicide responses from member agencies to help respond to and prevent violence.
- As a member agency of the VCRG, Code Enforcement reviewed over 23,161 parcels, documented over 2,131 code violations, identified 822 vacant structures, and accounted for 374 structures in the land bank in focus areas.

#### Vital Statistics

- Issued 56,907 certified birth certificates.
- Issued 61,550 certified death certificates.
- Approved 10,820 burial permits.
- Registered 25,613 new births.
- Registered 15,233 deaths

#### VOICE

- Provided case management services to 29 clients and successfully discharged 13 with no re-injury or additional hospitalization due to a violent act.
- Achieved 63% of enrolled clients who were seeking employment, already had established employment prior to enrollment, obtained a job, or started an employment/job readiness program while enrolled in VOICE.

- Achieved 97% of VOICE clients who completed their trauma clinic follow up appointments, while 84% attended or completed all medical appointments.

#### Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program (WIC)

- Served an active client caseload of 26,812 participants - the largest caseload in Ohio.
- Conducted 12,122 contacts by breastfeeding peers and 22,464 total contacts by all WIC staff to our breastfeeding families.
- Taught 66 live breastfeeding classes to 544 participants and support people and sent recorded classes to 747 participants and support people.
- Issued 6,000 \$30 vouchers to WIC participants for fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets.
- Participated in more than 113 outreach events, reaching more than 1,998 participants.
- Provided education on Urgent Maternal Warning Signs to 8,897 women as part of the State WIC SMART Goal to enhance health outcomes for women at risk of adverse events from hypertension during the prenatal and postpartum period, distributing 75 wrist blood pressure cuffs to qualified women.

#### Women's Health and Wellness Center

- Completed 5,093 visits and provided 409 LARCS (long-acting reversible contraception) with 95% provided same-day.
- Enrolled 94 residents in the Baby & Me Tobacco Free program with all babies born healthy and full-term.
- Implemented the Making Proud Choices curriculum in Berwick, Dominion, Sherwood, Woodward Park, and Starling middle schools as part of the CelebrateOne Teen Reproductive Health Education Committee.
- Held 20 mobile health events in the community to provide critical services directly to residents where they live and work.

# **Department of Human Resources 2023 Annual Report**



The Department of Human Resources provides leadership, direction and support to city departments. The department is responsible for administering employee benefit programs, coordinating and delivering citywide training and workforce development opportunities, designing and administering a fair, equitable and market driven compensation management system, and providing consistent and uniform administration of collective bargaining agreements. The Department of Human Resources also develops occupational safety and health programs and monitors compliance with established workplace safety standards. It administers drug-free workplace programs, coordinates citywide recognition and charitable programs, and ensures fair and equal treatment of employees and applicants.

In 2023, 49 employees (46 FT, 3 PT) were budgeted in Human Resources (HR) supporting the following programs: Administration, Citywide Training & Development, Employee Resources, the Equal Employment Resources Office, Compensation Management, Veteran's & ADA Affairs, Labor Relations, Employee Benefits & Wellness, and the Citywide Occupational Safety & Health Program.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

Human Resources Administration provides leadership, direction and support to the Department of Human Resources, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and the Department of the Inspector General. HR Administration engages in activities that support the Mayor's Equity Agenda, including participation on diversity and best practice committees, citywide policy development, and workforce and succession planning through regular engagement with human resource professionals throughout the City. In 2023, HR Administration participated in the coordination of the Opportunity Rising Career and Resource Fair and the launch of the City's first employee resource groups ("ERG").

HR Administration is also responsible for the Tuition Reimbursement Program. In 2023, the program administered \$1,322,211.36 in tuition reimbursement to City employees. This represents an increase of \$215,374.17 or 19% from the total amount administered in 2022. Additionally, 297 employees participated in the tuition reimbursement program in 2023 compared to 238 employees in 2022. This represents a 25% increase in employee participation. Lastly, in 2023, the average tuition reimbursement payment was \$4,451.89 compared to \$4,650.58 in 2022. This represents a 4.3% decrease in the average payment issued.

Finally, HR Administration is responsible for the management and administration of the Drug Free Safety Program (DFSP). The Drug and Alcohol Coordinator (DAC) oversees drug and alcohol testing of City employees in seven categories: pre-employment, reasonable suspicion, random, return-to-duty, follow-up, post-accident, and post-incident. In 2023, a total of 3,151 tests were conducted, consisting of 2,667 drug and 484 alcohol. The total number of tests administered in 2023 increased 12.10% compared to 2022.

### **CITYWIDE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

In 2023, Citywide Training and Development (CTD) continued to offer relevant, interactive and engaging training opportunities to employees. Course methods included in-person, virtual-instructor led, self-guided, eLearning, and training videos. In summary, CTD offered 198 separate course titles; conducted 285 in-person training sessions and 167 virtual instructor-led training sessions. A total of 18,887 training contacts were made in 2023. Of which, 7,728 employees completed Ethics training; 1,316 employees attended a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion related training; 851 employees attended Orientation; and 892 employees completed Drug-Free Safety Program training.

In 2023, 533 enterprise customers and 66 small business employees attended 40 separate course titles. Courses included but were not limited to Microsoft Excel Basics; Microsoft Word Basics; Developing High Performance Teams; Juggling Multiple Priorities; Employee Engagement through Coaching; Navigating Difficult Conversations; Microaggressions; Cultural Competency; Implicit Bias; Talk Like a Leader; and In the Grip: A Look at MBTI & Stress.

Citywide Training and Development also engaged with the community at the Opportunity Rising Career and Resource Fair conducting mini career development workshops and at various Rise Up CBUS neighborhood events providing quick reference guides and sharing information about training opportunities and the Small Business Training Program.

### **EMPLOYEE RESOURCES**

Employee Resources coordinates citywide philanthropic efforts that benefit vulnerable residents through the Combined Charitable Campaign, Gift of Music, and American Red Cross Blood Drives. In 2023, employees donated over \$130,000 through the Combined Charitable Campaign benefiting over 300 charitable organizations throughout Central Ohio. 2023 was the fourth year for a partnership with the Columbus Music

Commission's Gift of Music. This program places musical instruments in the hands of Columbus City School children as well as the Guitars Not Guns, Music Loves Ohio, and Transit Arts programs. City of Columbus employees helped the Gift of Music by promoting area donation events. Our partnership with American Red Cross remained strong in 2023. The City of Columbus was recognized by the Red Cross as a premier blood partner. In 2023 the City hosted six blood drives that yielded over 300 units, potentially saving over one thousand lives.

### **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES**

The Equal Employment Resource Office (EERO) is responsible for investigating complaints of discrimination, harassment and retaliation. The section is also responsible for the adherence to City policies as well as local and federal laws as they relate to securing equal employment opportunity and fair treatment of the City's workforce. In 2023, the EERO on behalf of the City submitted the biannual EEO-4 report to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The EERO investigated 21 total complaints of discrimination. Complaints came from the Departments of Recreation and Parks, Public Safety, Development, Technology, Human Resources, Public Utilities and Columbus Public Health. The EERO partnered with Human Resources Officers and Managers in an effort to assist and resolve employee conflicts with peers or management. The EERO facilitated two Transformative Mediation sessions and EEO training for 194 employees throughout the city.

The EERO supported the implementation of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) and revised the City's Nursing Employees policy to align with the PUMP Act, which requires reasonable accommodations to nursing employees. The EERO updated the Citywide Sexual Harassment/Anti-Harassment video voiceover for eLearning training which is used in the City's employee orientation as well as an annual training for employees throughout the City. Additionally, the EERO initiated a Citywide Human Resources Guide for conducting internal interviews and promotions.

### **COMPENSATION MANAGEMENT**

The Compensation Management program of the Department of Human Resources is responsible for the development, implementation and administration of compensation policies, procedures and strategies that promote the development of fair, equitable and market-driven compensation management systems. The program develops, implements and maintains compensation and performance management policies, procedures and programs that meet the needs of the citizens of Columbus for a qualified and motivated workforce, while ensuring fair and equitable treatment of our employees.

In 2023, the Compensation Management program area led the Request For Proposal (RFP) process for a Total Compensation Market Study for the vast majority of Columbus's more than 600 job classifications. Compensation Management authored the RFP and selected the project team to represent all departments and elected officials. With an expected early- to mid-2024 completion date, the study aims to inform the City of the current market value of its jobs and to review current employee benefits compared with best practices from both the public and private sectors.

Compensation Management introduced additional internal reporting of compensation data by utilizing recent available technology. Useful for both retention and recruiting, this additional data allows departments to make more informed decisions on internal comparables, and to measure pay equity while remaining competitive with broader compensation market trends. The program area also successfully integrated employee data with the existing payroll and personnel system for improved administration of the City's performance management software. The solution removes the necessity to manually add or change data, improving efficiency across the City and saving taxpayer resources.

Compensation Management performed more than 35 special-request pay reviews and pay recommendations for new classifications in 2023 by using a salary survey and compensation analysis tool, in addition to communication with more than 60 other jurisdictions locally, statewide, and nationwide to ensure Columbus continues to offer new and current employees competitive, fair, and equitable salaries.

In addition to participating in or producing more than 90 salary surveys, the program continued to analyze and report on current compensation issues while also providing data and expertise during the collective bargaining process.

### **VETERANS AFFAIRS & AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES**

The City Veterans Services Coordinator is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and serving as a resource for managers within the City of Columbus and its residents. The Veteran Affairs Coordinator maintains and attends a variety of public meetings with area veterans' services organizations (VSOs) at all levels of government. Additionally, 2023 marked the 22nd anniversary of the tragic events of September 11th, 2001 and offered the community a moment of reflection at our annual remembrance ceremony.

The Americans with Disabilities Coordinator is responsible for ensuring compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and serving as an internal and external resource for individuals seeking information and guidance on the landmark anti-discrimination law. The ADA is a broad law that demands input and experience from across the City of Columbus. In 2023 we garnered public feedback through the Mayor's Columbus Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (CACDI) delivering updates on City policy and connecting specific concerns of the public with key contacts within City departments. The ADA Coordinator responded to inquiries on matters pertaining to the ADA or issues faced by persons with disabilities and connects them with community resources and information.

### **LABOR RELATIONS**

The Labor Relations program area supports the collective bargaining activity with each of the bargaining units and ensures consistent application of the provisions of all the collective bargaining contracts. In 2023, negotiations took center stage as several collective bargaining agreements

expired. Key issues at negotiations were introducing and implementing Paid Family Leave, raising minimum pay to \$20/hr for full time employees and eliminating sick leave reciprocity.

Labor Relations completed negotiations for successor collective bargaining agreements with AFSCME Local 2191 (new agreement expires March 31, 2026) and CWA Local 4502 (new agreement expires April 23, 2026); and began negotiations with FOP, Lodge #9 and IAFF Local #67 on successor collective bargaining agreements. Labor Relations also negotiated several memorandums of understanding (MOU) spanning all six Unions. Labor Relations negotiated two (2) MOUs in AFSCME Local 2191, eight (8) MOUs in AFSCME Local 1632, one (1) MOU in CWA Local 4502, four (4) MOUs in FOP, Lodge #9, two (2) MOUs in FOP-OLC and one (1) MOU in IAFF Local 67. Lastly, Labor Relations coordinated pre-negotiations efforts among City Departments to compile data to support proposals for upcoming negotiations with AFSCME Local 1632 beginning in late February 2024.

Labor Relations oversaw the Labor Relations Advisory Committee to communicate updates and direction on labor relations issues. It conducted trainings on the basics of contract administration and the drug free safety program as well as training on engaging in the interactive process in anticipation of fitness for duty hearings.

Labor Relations also conducts grievance, disciplinary and fitness for duty hearings for AFSCME Local 1632, AFSCME Local 2191, CWA Local 4502, FOP/OLC bargaining unit members, as well as certain Management Compensation Plan employees within the City. In 2023, the Section oversaw the following:

- Grievances
  - Fifty-one (51) new Step 2 grievances were filed;
  - Forty-seven (47) grievances were heard at Step 2;
  - Five (5) active cases were withdrawn;
  - One (1) active case was settled;
  - Nine (9) cases went to arbitration.
- Discipline (suspension/termination cases)
  - One hundred fifteen (115) cases filed;
  - Fifty-five (55) cases were settled;
  - Eight (8) employees resigned;
  - Seven (7) cases were withdrawn;
  - Six (6) last chance agreements were executed.
- Fitness for Duty Hearings
  - Twenty-seven (27) hearings held;
  - Four (4) employees were separated.

In addition, Labor Relations implemented software for tracking grievances, discipline, fitness for duty hearings and arbitrations as well as labor costing software.

## **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND WELLNESS**

Employee Benefits and Wellness programs deliver and administer the medical, pharmacy, dental, vision, short-term disability, basic life, cancer advocacy, COBRA, and partner with Colonial Life on voluntary plans for City employees and eligible dependents, by Plan eligibility and design, applicable laws, ordinance and negotiated union contracts. In addition, the Healthy Columbus program provides employees and family members with opportunities to improve their health, well-being, and quality of life through programs managed internally and through our partnership with United Healthcare medical, pharmacy wellness credits and platform, Ohio Health Front Street Fitness Management and programming, YellowBird Foodshed, Snappy Gifts, and other diverse business owners and community partners within the central Ohio region. These partnerships provide physical fitness activities, mental health support, chronic disease management, nutritional and healthy eating support, tobacco cessation programs and resources and incentives for healthy lifestyle behaviors.

The Employee Benefits and Wellness team completed its annual medical audit and pharmacy pricing reviews and audits in 2023 for the 2022 Plan year. The audit and pricing review revealed effective vendor management due to the contracting and diligence with auditing and reviewing records on an annual basis. The City of Columbus recovered the \$36,000 from the pharmacy pricing review. United Healthcare exceeded all performance metrics, with a net underpayment of claims just under \$3,000. The Plan continues to perform well, and the audits support current Plan design strategies and improvements.

The Employee Benefits Fund for January 1, 2023 through January 31, 2024, has a cash balance of \$28.7 million, which is sufficient to cover the reserve calculation of \$20.6 million. The January-to-January average monthly expenditure (13 months) for the Benefits Fund is at \$17.5 million (excludes the Employee Benefits Administrative sub-fund and Unemployment), which is higher than the overall monthly average for 2022 (\$16.4

million). The monthly expense exceeded the monthly revenue by approximately \$3.6 million which contributed to the decrease in the cash balance. The estimated 2023 expense projected by our consultant AON, reduced by the Rx rebates is \$201,471,219, and the actual expense reduced by the Rx rebates is \$198,619,556.

### **CITYWIDE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM**

The Citywide Occupational Safety and Health Program (COSHP) provides leadership and policy development, as well as necessary supplies and services, to ensure and improve the safety of all employees. Physical fitness assessments for police and fire employees and the Occupational Safety and Health Clinics are incorporated into this program as well.

COSHP works under the authority of the Mayors Executive Order 01-02 and provides OSHA/Public Employee Risk Reduction Program (PERRP) compliance assistance, industrial hygiene monitoring, safety training, written program development, and complete OSHA/PERRP audit services. 2023 highlights of the Citywide Occupational Safety and Health Program include:

- Continued assistance to divisions with regulatory requirements related to notifying PERRP of employee hospitalizations resulting from workplace injuries. This included incident investigation and discovery followed by corrective actions and retraining, when necessary.
- Development of the City of Columbus Safe Work Practices for the Prevention of Infectious Respiratory Illnesses. This guidance was created to permanently replace the City of Columbus COVID-19 Safe Work Practice Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to provide long-term guidance for the prevention of infectious respiratory illness.
- Identified need for personal fall arrest systems and fall protection training for structural building inspectors. Facilitated the purchase of personal fall arrest systems and training for all structural building inspectors. The use of this personal protective equipment will prevent potentially serious injuries from falls when working above six feet in an aerial lift bucket.
- Supported the Department of Building and Zoning Services during their response at the Sawyer Towers complex. Provided a qualitative assessment of potential employee risk at the Sawyer Towers complex following improper asbestos abatement work performed by a contractor. Provided in-person asbestos refresher training for all field employees in the Department. Also conducted personal air monitoring for BZS staff who returned to the building following cleaning.
- Conducted an asbestos air monitoring project for Code Enforcement during the performance of interior inspections. Twelve days of monitoring was conducted over a 4-month period and the final results show, with statistical significance that Code Enforcement Officers are not overexposed to asbestos during their routine job duties and additional protective measures were not required.
- Worked with Citywide Training and Development to create a virtual course for all new City of Columbus supervisors: “Supervisor Safety and Accident Analysis”. The training provides critical information to new supervisors regarding their role in occupational health and safety, injury prevention, accident reporting procedures, and conducting an accident analysis following a workplace injury. Additionally, the training meets the requirements for the BWC Drug Free Safety Program.
- Consulted with the Division of Fire and National Institute of Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) during an ongoing fire ground air sampling project to measure exterior firefighter exposures.
- Provided high level staff support to various departments needing assistance with their safety programs including program development, training, accident investigations, and day to day operational needs.
- Assisted Recreation & Parks with environmental compliance by maintaining Universal Waste, SWPPP and SPCC programs; with onboarding of seasonal employees during Spring/Summer; with running their First Aid/CPR Training Program; and with Active Aggressor/De-escalation training for Recreation and Field Staff. Additionally, coordinated employees in the Hearing Conservation Program through annual PERRP required audiograms and training.
- Continue citywide implementation of iReportSource, a safety management software system. iReportSource is primarily be used for accident reporting and replaces the hardcopy accident report that has historically been used. Additionally, this system can be used for document retrieval, investigation support, corrective actions, root cause analysis, OSHA/PERRP compliance documents, and assigning any follow-up items or training.
- Received Certification as an American Red Cross First Aid/CPR Instructor Trainer and in turn certified 97 Municipal Court employees

### **RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Risk Management program manages the workers’ compensation, and injury leave programs in accordance with City and Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation (BWC) policies, procedures, and union contracts and partners with the Citywide Occupational Safety & Health Program to control workers’ compensation costs through collaboration on injury reduction. The Risk Management team facilitates the claims process by initiating and maintaining communications with all involved parties, developing action plans for injury claims, and managing to resolution. Responsible for the review and processing of disability relief applications, and represents the City’s interest before the Ohio Industrial Commission. Highlights of the Risk Management section include:

- Continued and ongoing emphasis and attention on activities such as the pursuit of disability relief, claim settlement and subrogation, and proactive claims management have resulted in cost savings of \$800K
- Successful management, tracking, and on-time reporting of performance in BWC rebate and cost-saving programs, including the Industry Specific Safety Program (ISSP), the Transitional Work Performance Bonus, Safety Council Participation rebates, Go-Green and Policy

Activity rebates, the Substance Use Recovery Workplace Program (SURWSP), and the Lapse-Free rebate has resulted in premium rebates of more than \$1.6M during the 2023 policy year.

- In collaboration with the City Auditor's Office and the BWC, obtained a 2% discount on the City's 2024 BWC premium by planning and executing early payment of the entire 2024 premium, resulting in savings of approximately \$305K.
- To take advantage of a new, lower cost "clerical" employee code for calculating BWC premiums, partnered with the City Auditor's Office to identify payroll associated with clerical employees, resulting in reduction of BWC premium by approximately \$2M.
- Represented the City's interests before the Ohio Industrial Commission on more than 2,300 issues.

# **Office of Violence Prevention 2023 Annual Report**

The Office of Violence Prevention is the city’s coordination center for violence prevention resources and activities. As the first office of its kind in the state of Ohio, it evaluates existing programming, collects data and conducts research in collaboration with city departments, public- and private-sector partners and members of the Columbus community. The team will coordinate anti-gun violence efforts across Columbus, ensuring the resources are being allocated equitably across the city and that efforts are not being unnecessarily duplicated

The first director, Rena Shak, was announced in March. The office has been working to hire staff and collect data in order to determine what other violence prevention programs exist in central Ohio.

- Attended nearly 1000 community meetings or events
- Hosted a community conversation about what the city is doing to end violence
- Hosted a gun buyback event
  - Handguns: 201
  - Shotguns: 75
  - Rifles: 68
  - Total: 344
  - Gift cards paid: \$136,600
- Now working with community and city-funded intervention groups to create a single strategy to fight gun violence.

# **Department of Public Safety 2023 Annual Report**



The Department of Public Safety manages the operations for the Divisions of Police, Fire, and Support Services for the City of Columbus. Its mission is to provide outstanding public safety services to the residents of Columbus, allowing “every resident, on every street, in every neighborhood” to feel safe. Under the leadership of Mayor Andrew J. Ginther and Kate McSweeney-Pishotti, the Department of Public Safety made major advances in 2023. From the creation of new partnerships to fight gun violence, to the full launch of the Columbus Violence Reduction strategy, to a complete overhaul of response to civil unrest, the department kept its focus on public safety, first responder wellness, and utilizing every resource available to better serve the people of Columbus.

## SAFETY DIRECTOR’S OFFICE

### Of Significant Interest-

- Opening of Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC)
- Record number of illegal guns removed from community
- Full launch of Columbus Violence Reduction strategy
- Complete Overhaul of Police Response to Civil Unrest
- Police Patrol Restructuring, Creation of Zone 6
- Expansion of successful Right Response Unit
- Leadership Changes in Public Safety and CPD
- Built on the momentum of diversity initiatives in both police & fire divisions

### Opening of Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC)

The Central Ohio CGIC focuses exclusively on investigating and preventing gun violence. This partnership with city, state and federal authorities combines the expertise of firearm evidence examiners, intelligence analysts and investigators under one roof to rapidly collect, analyze and share information about guns used in violent crimes. The centerpiece of the CGIC is the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), developed by the ATF to help law enforcement connect gun crimes nationwide.

### Removed a Record Number of Illegal Guns from Community

Officers removed 3693 guns from the streets in 2023, a new record for a single year. 160 of these guns were assault-style weapons. 43 of them were so-called “Ghost Guns,” un-serialized and untraceable firearms that can be bought online and assembled at home. These are designed to avoid gun laws. Officers seized 75 Glock switches in 2023, compared to 17 in 2022 and none in 2021. Glock switches are devices as small as a quarter that can turn a semi-automatic handgun into a fully automatic weapon.

### Leadership Changes

In April, Mayor Ginther appointed Kate McSweeney-Pishotti Director of Public Safety. McSweeney-Pishotti brings more than three decades of experience in criminal justice, neighborhood safety and public policy, previously serving as Public Safety Deputy Director and Deputy Chief of Staff to the Mayor. She is the first woman to serve as the City’s Safety Director. In January, Chief Elaine Bryant filled out her Executive Staff with the appointments of four new Deputy Chiefs: D/C Robert Sagle, D/C Elrico Alli, D/C Nick Konves and D/C Tim Myers.

### Full Launch of Columbus Violence Reduction

In June, Columbus Violence Reduction (CVR) held its first Call-in Session, followed by a second Call-in in October. CVR is an unprecedented partnership between community members, law enforcement and social service providers, united by a common goal to stop violence and keep our city’s highest-risk residents safe, alive and out of prison. CVR is based on the reality that violence in our city is being driven by a very small proportion (approximately .05%) of the population, mostly members of groups—like gangs, drug crews, and the like. These group members are also at extraordinarily disproportionate risk of violent victimization.

Through CVR, these partners engage directly with groups whose members are most likely to shoot or be shot. Once participants are connected with CVR, the expectation is that they will not continue to participate in any violent acts, or perpetuate violence in any way. If they do, they will be held accountable with the full force of the law. The Call-in is one of the primary tools for the anti-violence message. It is a face-to-face meeting between law enforcement, community figures, social service providers, and group members. In 2023, of 81 people CVR engaged via Call-in Session or Custom Notification, 75% of those individuals signed up for services, and at year’s end remained safe, alive and out of prison.

### Complete Overhaul of Police Response to Civil Unrest

The Columbus Police Dialogue Team was formed as part of the Division's efforts to improve the efficacy of police engagement with people exercising their First Amendment rights to speech and peaceful assembly. The approach taken by the Dialogue Team is rooted in crowd psychology and informed by research by European scholars who study best practices related to protecting First Amendment activity while promoting public safety. The Dialogue Team proactively connects with community groups to build relationships, trust, and a shared understanding of the role of law enforcement in such activity. Their work has proven successful in facilitating First Amendment activity, deescalating potentially volatile situations, improving community-police relations, and maintaining public safety. The Dialogue Unit is now the primary tactic of the agency's new science-led operational response to First Amendment events. Its mission is to facilitate the freedom of expression by building community partnerships, enhancing two-way communication and police legitimacy, improving problem-solving capacity, augmenting command decision-making, and deescalating tensions.

### Police Patrol Restructuring, Creation of Zone 6

In April 2023, the Columbus Division of Police announced a restructured Police Zone map, to help better serve the needs of our growing city. The City was previously broken into five police zones, each containing four precincts. This restructuring created a sixth zone with a goal of balancing calls for service more evenly, and keeping neighborhoods together within service areas. Chief Elaine Bryant said the change will ensure that police personnel are closer to the areas they serve, with the intention of decreasing response times and allowing our community to better know their patrol officers. This restructuring more evenly distributes workloads throughout patrol, for officers and supervisors. This will allow sergeants to better supervise and engage officers and the community.

### Continued expansion of Right Response Unit

In a collaboration between Public Safety and Columbus Public Health, the Right Response Unit (RRU) embeds social workers in the 911 Emergency Call Center. These mental health professionals work with 911 Dispatchers on calls related to mental health or substance use disorders to deescalate crisis situations and connect callers with the appropriate resources. The RRU launched in 2021, and has expanded to meet increasing demand. RRU personnel triaged 4501 events in 2023. Nearly one-third of those calls did not require a police response, freeing up officers to respond to other calls for service, while linking those in crisis to appropriate health services. The RRU works in conjunction with existing Alternative Response programs: RREACT, SPARC, and the Mobile Crisis Response Unit.

### Diversifying Public Safety

2023 saw continued momentum in efforts to diversify both police and fire divisions.

- Columbus Police May Recruit Class: 28% diversity
- Columbus Police August Recruit Class: 38% diversity
- Columbus Police December Recruit Class: 35% diversity
- Columbus Fire June Recruit Class: 45% diversity
- Columbus Fire October Recruit Class: 49% diversity
- Columbus Fire December Recruit Class: 22% diversity

In May of 2023, the Columbus Division of Police announced its commitment to the 30x30 initiative, a coalition of law enforcement leaders, researchers and professional organizations who have joined together to advance the representation and experiences of women in all ranks of policing. The initiative aims to increase the ranks of women in law enforcement to 30% by the year 2030. The department also applied for, and won, a \$1,000,000 grant to support recruiting efforts. The Cadet Program established in 2019 continues to serve as a pipeline of diversity. The multi-year paid internship introduces under-represented communities to, and trains them for, careers in public safety.

- 37 former Cadets have earned employment with the Division of Fire
- CPD's 2023 Cadet Class had 88% diversity- the largest percentage of females since the program's inception.
- 23 former Cadets have earned employment with the Division of Police

### Nuisance Abatement

The Department, working with the City Attorney's Office, increased joint enforcement initiatives in the area of nuisances. Nuisance abatement cases were filed against 21 houses, one market, two hotels, three bars, three businesses, and 4 gas stations due to evidence of drug sales and violent criminal activity. The City objected to 8 liquor permits in 2023, and out of the 12 liquor permits objected to in 2022, 9 were resolved with agreed nuisance findings (including 3 under new ownership), and 3 businesses decided to close/vacate. The City objected to two hotel licenses in 2023. Of the two hotel licenses objected to in 2022, both were resolved via agreed nuisance findings.

### BRICK AND MORTAR

#### Fire and Police Facilities

- Began the design of Fire Station 36 at Central College and Harlem Road
- Continued the HVAC renovations on the Central Safety Building
- Completed elevator replacement at Fire Station 1
- Continued installation of generator at Fire Station 1

- Renamed the Fire Training Academy the “Dr. Ned Pettus, Jr. Fire Training Academy”
- Completed design and entered into contract to replace the AC Chillers at the Fire Training Academy
- Completed the renovation of women’s locker room facilities at the Fire Academy
- Completed the Central Safety 8th floor interior renovations
- Began the design of Police substation 19 on Sullivant Avenue
- Completed the demolition of Carolyn Avenue/Piedmont properties
- Entered into contract to design the Public Safety Campus (Real Time Crime Center, EOC, and 911 ECC)
- Continued design of improvements to the parking lot at the Police Impound Lot
- Completed interior pavement replacement at Fire Station 15
- Completed exterior roof maintenance at the Police Crime Lab and Property Room
- Completed the lighting improvements at the Fire Training Academy auditorium
- Completed kitchen improvements at Fire Station 22
- Completed FS 8 flooring replacement
- Completed electrical work at the 911 Emergency Communications Center
- Installed new work station consoles for the 911 Emergency Communications Center
- Initiated design of FS17 bay heater replacement
- Initiated design of ballistic window installation at lobby of Police HQ
- Initiated design of FS24 women’s locker room upgrade
- Initiated design of FS22 women’s locker room upgrade
- Initiated design of security enhancements at the Fire Administration building
- Legislated the upgrade of the 911 Telephone System
- Legislated new dispatch protocol software

#### DIVISION OF POLICE

- Class of 29 recruits started in May
- Class of 50 recruits started in August
- Class of 46 recruits started in December
- Ordered 69 marked and 15 unmarked vehicles
- Ordered 1 digital forensic vehicle
- Sold 1 Police Helicopter
- Received 76 marked and 18 unmarked vehicles

#### DIVISION OF FIRE

- Class of 40 recruits started in June
- Class of 43 recruits started in October
- Class of 45 recruits started in December
- Ordered 6 medics
- Ordered 5 engines
- Ordered 1 ladder
- Ordered 1 tow vehicle
- Ordered 1 forklift
- Ordered 8 rescue boats and 2 trailers
- Ordered 4 marked and 10 unmarked vehicles
- Ordered 15 Lucas devices
- Ordered 7 Stryker cots
- Ordered 1 RREACT vehicle
- Ordered and received 4 vehicles for Wellness and Diversity Offices
- Ordered 5 alternative response vehicles
- Received 3 engines
- Received 7 EMS vehicles
- Received 1 ladder
- Received 5 boats
- Received 3 marked and 5 unmarked vehicles

#### DIVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES

##### 911 Emergency Communications Center:

- ECC Personnel Handled 1,465,090 Phone Contacts including:
  - 682,813 911 Calls
  - 755,100 Administrative (Non-Emergency) Calls

- 27,177 Text Messages

- ECC continues to provide emergency telecommunications support to the RRU M-F 8:30 AM – Midnight, excluding City Holidays.
- The ECC entered into an MOU with 988 providers North Central Mental Health and Netcare to formalize the call transfer process from the ECC to 988 and vice-versa
- Supported the creation of CPD Patrol zone six which went live on April 30, 2023
- Designed, configured, and procured new state-of-the-art dispatch consoles.
- Promoted two 911 Emergency Communications Specialists (Supervisors)
- CAD & GIS Support Team:
- Successfully deployed CPD's 6th Patrol Zone.
- Deployed CFD's TabletCommand Two-Way Integration that allows supervisory units in the field to manage major incidents.
- Deployed the Banner and PLT interface which allows for person-level tracking of PD & FD personnel.
- Created an interface between CAD and CPD that allows for auto-tagging of AXON Body Camera footage to CAD Event Numbers.
- Stood-up new Development Environment for CAD System to assist with testing patches, windows update.
- Created an interface with COTA that allows them to view real-time traffic-related calls for service.

#### 911 Telephony Support Team

- E911 Viper System processed 2,405,982 911 and Administration calls. Increase of 35,973 calls from 2022.
- E911 Viper System processed 3,486 Text Sessions, increase of 427 sessions from 2022 which included 31,486 Text Messages, increase of 5,598 from 2022.
- Division of Fire AT&T leased circuit audit. Audit produced annual savings of approximately 500K yearly.
- Verint V15 Logger installation and setup. Project was complete in 2023. Features offered will continue to be expanded to improve services moving forward.
- Viper 7 Refresh Project started in 2023 which consist of a total hardware/software replacement of the existing 911 PSAP equipment for Columbus and the six 911 Partners. The City of Columbus Divisions of Fire and Police were successfully migrated in 2023 with all partners expected to be on-line mid-2024.
- Locution Automated Dispatching System processed 301,876 Fire dispatches in 2023.

#### Radio Frequency Support Team

- 8,801,029 successful push to talks (PTT) and over 47,952 hours of talk time on the radio system with zero busies.
- 52,943 private calls (walkie to walkie) utilizing over 748 hours of talk time.
- 3,976 phone patch calls utilizing over 38 hours of talk time.
- 1,359 emergency banners initiated utilizing a little over 6 hours of talk time.
- Zero down-time for the radio system.
- Use of the radio system was never above 25% of its capacity for the year.
- Data accounts for over 9,000 radios actively utilizing the radio system.
- Flash updated and reprogrammed almost 5,000 police and fire radios for 2025 mandate.
- Provided radio communications support for major events such as Red, White, and Boom, the Arnold Classic, numerous runs including the Columbus Marathon, and numerous other public events.
- Took on Ohio State radio traffic onto the Columbus radio system due to interference on the OSU system. This helped OSU to continue utilizing radios until the issue was resolved. There was little to no effect on the Columbus radio system related to onboarding this traffic.
- Updated data cabling and furniture for Emergency Communications Center. Over 40 positions in three work centers were removed and replaced while keeping operations running at full capacity.

#### License Section Statistics for 2023:

- 451 "Bug Your Bike" packets
- 2103 BCI background checks

#### Issued:

- 43 Alarm Dealer permits
- 26 Arcade licenses
- 485 Charitable Solicitation licenses
- 156 Commercial Sales/Tri-Annual/Promoter licenses
- 5 Community Market permits
- 20 Community Noise permits
- 1 Dangerous Ordnance permit
- 165 Hotel/Motel licenses
- 43 Massage Establishment permits
- 107 Masseur/Masseuse licenses
- 61 Mobile Food Vending Public Right of Way permits
- 440 Mobile Food Vending licenses

- 36 Parade permits
- 13 Professional Fundraiser permits
- 4 Scrap Metal Facilities permits
- 1579 Short Term Rental licenses
- 450 Vehicle for Hire driver's licenses
- 387 Vehicle for Hire owner licenses
- 60 Vehicle Transfer licenses

Weights and Measures Section Inspectors Completed:

- 16,503 device inspections
- 7 package inspections
- 28 lots inspected
- 817 packages represented in the 28 lots
- 3 lots rejected resulting in 65 packages removed from sale
- 213 price verification inspections with 8275 prices verified
- Resolved 62 consumer complaints

Fiscal Section highlights for 2023:

- 494 Indigent Burial Payments
- Revenue for the Division \$1,797,567.09

# **Recreation and Parks Department 2023 Annual Report**

Columbus Recreation and Parks Department was first created 113 years ago in 1910 with a budget of \$6,000 to oversee 10 playgrounds, four recreation programs, various athletic fields and facilities, and an outdoor sports program.

Today, the department has 415 parks, 32 community centers and recreational facilities, five athletic complexes, nearly 15,000 acres of parkland, 230 miles of regional trails and much more. Our mission is to connect the people of our community through the power of nature, wellness and creativity, and our vision is a socially equitable city. Our values are Joy, Open, Community, Nature and Legacy. Below are some of the ways the department has served our community and our mission over the last year.

#### Letter from Our Director

In 2023, we dedicated ourselves to excellence by establishing a new conservation section, creating an equitable work culture, achieving CAPRA accreditation and celebrating several wins which we called “The 4 C’s.”

Achieving CAPRA accreditation, the highest honor in our field, underscores our commitment of excellence to our community. I want to thank our staff, residents and City leaders for their support — none of these accomplishments would have been possible without you.

Here’s to a bright future filled with even more to come in 2024. This year, we will focus on our “4 R’s” — reach, reinvest, recreate and reshape. It’s our responsibility to reach out to our community, reinvest in personnel and recreate as needed to stay current with trends while reshaping the culture of our department.

Bernita A. Reese, M.S., CPRP – Director

#### Big Wins

- The department was proud to earn CAPRA Accreditation from the National Recreation and Park Association. Only 2 percent of agencies hold this honor.
- We celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month by participating in the parade and hosting community events.
- 5,200+ PLAY scholarships were awarded, ensuring all youth have access to participate in recreation programs.
- A new Conservation Section was created. This section leverages the department’s education, protection and advocacy resources and expertise.
- 5,300+ youth learned valuable life skills and sportsmanship through golf.
- The VOICE program, in collaboration with Columbus Public Health, earned a National Recreation and Park Association Innovation Award for its work supporting victims of violent crime and helping break the cycle of violence.
- Construction began on the Fran Ryan Center. This new facility will serve as a place for our older residents to engage in creative pursuits and wellness activities.
- 10,700+ residents gave back through volunteer efforts in park clean-ups, tree plantings and beautification projects.
- The Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging (COAAA) was awarded a \$1.5M grant to help launch a new Social Determinants of Health Accelerator Program.
- 3,100+ older adults were provided with information and assistance related to caregiving, housing and other benefits.
- Afterschool Programming was expanded to 11 additional community centers for a total of 15 locations.

#### Conserving Our Natural Environment

Protecting our resources ensures they are here for generations to come

- Passed the first updated public tree code in the City in more than 30 years. This initiative will help the City double its tree canopy.
- Hosted environmental-themed art exhibitions and events encouraging participants to rethink their relationship with our planet.
- Acquired 107 acres of new parkland, which will offer more access to greenspaces, specifically in underserved neighborhoods.

- Planted 3,000+ trees to increase Columbus' urban canopy, which benefits residents by providing cleaner air, cooler temperatures and more walkable communities.

### Building for the Future

Long-term, strategic investments in all facilities allows us to build for today and plan for tomorrow

- Invested in athletic complexes like Kilbourne Run to continue to give residents access to premier facilities all over the City and increase tourism.
- Reduced our energy footprint by more than 40 percent by automating building controls in facilities.
- Approved the development of 36 new dedicated pickleball courts, including a new 12-court indoor complex at Mock Park, in response to the skyrocketing popularity of the sport.
- Managed \$120 million in capital improvement projects.

### Creating a More Equitable City

Ensuring all residents have access to quality programs, services and facilities

- Opened the new Glenwood and Windsor pools, ensuring access to aquatics facilities and life-saving swimming lessons.
- Linked 280+ youth to career opportunities and resources that help them see their future potential through our Job Readiness program.
- Celebrated Columbus' vibrant Black culture, music and soul during CBUS Soul Fest, bringing Grammy Award-winning artists to the city for a free community event.
- COAAA provided 10,000+ older adults with case management services across eight counties.

### Strengthening Our Community

Working together and leveraging resources allows us to build a stronger community

- Hosted 240,000+ residents at 38 free community events and festivals celebrating Columbus' culture, creativity and community.
- Shared information about programs and services with 6,800+ residents at community events, connecting them with all of the resources the department offers.
- 4,800+ residents attended classes and workshops at the Priscilla R. Tyson Cultural Arts Center.
- 6,500+ community members received meals, winter essentials and gifts during the holiday season through our Adopt a Center program.

### THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

- 1 + 1 Foundation
- 7NT
- Accenture
- American Electric Power
- AmeriHealth Caritas
- Anser Advisory
- Arcadis US, Inc.
- Black & Veatch Holding Co.
- Boar's Head
- Brian S. Casey Memorial Fund
- Chris and Lori Holtmann Foundation
- Coca-Cola
- Columbia Gas
- Columbus Blue Jackets Foundation
- Columbus Building Trades Council
- Columbus Crew
- Columbus Downtown Development Corporation
- Columbus Urban League
- Community for New Direction
- Cooper Family Foundation
- Crane Group
- Crowe LLP
- CTL Engineering
- Dick's Sporting Goods
- Dynotec, Inc.
- George R. McCue
- Google
- Grange Insurance
- HDR, Inc.



- Hill International
- In The Number
- Jacobi Carbons
- Jay and Elaine Stowe
- Kokosing Industrial, Inc.
- Midstates Recreation
- ms consultants
- Roosters
- SMBH, Inc.
- Smoot Construction
- Southeast Lions Club Foundation
- Stanley Steemer International, Inc.
- Stantec
- T&M Associates
- Walmart
- White Castle

## DEPARTMENT AT A GLANCE

### Department Assets: What We Are

- 32 community centers and specialty facilities
- 5 athletic complexes and 6 golf courses
- 8 outdoor pools, one indoor pool, and 7 spraygrounds and interactive fountains
- 415 parks across 14,978 acres
- 230 miles of regional trails
- 3 reservoirs
- 20 nature preserves
- 3 skate parks and 5 dog parks
- 14 reservable event venues and 20 reservable open air shelters
- 170 playgrounds

### Department Community Engagement: Who We Serve

- 1,985,272 residents reached via on-site programs, events and facilities
- 396,213 program participants at 5 athletic complexes
- 160,400 tournament/league participants and guests at Berliner Sports Park
- 82,060 participants in aquatics programs and 535 registered participants for free swim lessons
- 263,458 golf participants
- 62,635 community recreation program registrations and 15,566 Priscilla R. Tyson Cultural Arts Center visitors and class participants
- 275,396 free meals served through summer and afterschool food programs
- 2,676 fitness room visits
- 10,754 volunteers
- 161,060 celebrated a special occasion at department rental facilities

### Department Conservation Efforts: How We Conserve

- 22,350 park trees
- 3,100 park and street trees planted and 2,900 native plants planted
- 95,900 bags of trash removed from parks
- 36 pollinator gardens across 57 acres of pollinator habitat and 6 wetlands conserved
- 19,700 kWh from solar panels on out net-zero building at the McKnight Outdoor Education Center
- 9 miles of state-designated water trail on the Olentangy River

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

2023 Total Annual Revenue: \$17,229,295.047

- ACTIVEnet® Transaction Fees: \$17,722.45
- Adult Sports: \$3,336,393.60
- Aquatics: \$185,931.85
- Arts: \$464,351.49
- Boat Clubs: \$172,435.91

- Camps: \$339,522.60
- CIP Reimbursement EAB/UFMP: \$1,197,869.14
- CIP Reimbursement Design & Construction: \$1,000,339.41
- Community Centers: \$997,734.41
- Fitness: \$154,580.00
- Golf: \$7,120,726.72
- Misc. Revenue-Other: \$34,923.35
- Outdoor Recreation: \$215,887.00
- Permits Facilities and Docks: \$1,245,495.25
- PLAY Grant Reimbursement: \$229,350.00
- Refunds: \$14,784.68
- Rent: \$28,283.50
- Special Activities Permits: \$217,659.00
- Therapeutic Recreation: \$55,140.09
- Youth Sports: \$200,164.59

2023 Total Annual Expenditure: \$69,658,813.11

- Administration: \$4,602,505.39
- Adult Sports: \$3,075,911.32
- APPS: \$2,573,033.00
- Aquatics: \$1,399,112.76
- Building Maintenance: \$2,540,940.31
- Camps: \$41,101.68
- Capital Kids: \$25,250.64
- Community Recreation: \$12,192,985.26
- Community Relations: \$1,370,403.78
- Cultural Arts Center: \$719,834.31
- Design and Construction: \$895,803.77
- EAB: \$(149.50)
- Fiscal: \$1,721,582.07
- Forestry: \$2,145,222.64
- Golf: \$4,059,060.25
- Health & Wellness: \$849,887
- Human Resources: \$818,089.20
- Internal Bills: \$5,656,684.28
- Misc.: \$475,000.00
- Other: \$1,644,462.77
- Outdoor Recreation: \$377,558.96
- Park Maintenance: \$6,713,240.92
- Rental Services: \$901,629.74
- Special Events: \$1,632,652.71
- Strategic Planning: \$942,315.53
- Summer Food: \$129,341.67
- Therapeutic Recreation: \$745,922.75
- Urban Forestry Master Plan: \$1,350,645.60
- Warehouse: \$427,151.35
- Youth Sports: \$122,094.55

#### MISSION FORWARD STRATEGIC PAN

The department’s strategic plan is a “mission forward” promise, dedicated to advancing the department’s goal to work toward its mission and vision. Below are key priority areas and goals for this plan.

#### Smart Growth

- Through targeted acquisition and trail construction, connect unserved residents to a future park or trail within a 10-minute walk of their home.
- Develop new parks and trail connections that enhance service for 50,000 residents within a ten-minute walk.
- Achieve a staffing model that reflects proportionate growth.
- Position and align CRPD assets for the future.

- Achieve growth in service level through strategic partnerships.
- Implement key changes to Policy and Code affecting Recreation and Parks.

#### Sustainability

- Achieve the department's Natural Resource Sustainability Goals.
- Develop and implement the Urban Forestry Master Plan.
- Increase efficiency through operational planning, reducing costs and achieving tiered cost recovery goals for all activities. Exceed cost-recovery goals in Golf, Sports and Rental Services.
- Achieve annual increases in leveraged operational and capital dollars: grants, sponsorships and donations.

#### Excellence in Programming and Service Delivery

- Drive annual growth in program participation through data-informed and inclusive programming.
- Implement Center for Opportunities model at the Linden Community Center.
- Maximize internal, cross-sectional partnership in programming.
- Improve customer experience feedback loops, and benchmarking.
- Adopt national best-practices and operating processes that result in CAPRA accreditation.

#### Organizational Development

- Develop a system and process for data collection, management and analysis to support decision making and evaluate performance.
- Define an organizational culture that's informed by our operating values, value-proposition, and the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plan.
- Implement staffing and programmatic succession planning.
- Build staff capacities and create leadership opportunities.
- Develop and implement a new volunteer program model.

#### Communications

- Align external communication to the department's strategic priorities.
- Improve external relationships through responsive and deliberate communication with the public.
- Improve internal communication that results in staff engagement and improved performance.
- Define and promote our value-proposition to the community.

# **Office of Diversity and Inclusion 2023 Annual Report**

The Mayor's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) focuses on advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion through collaboration with city departments and community partners. ODI's lines of business, including Equity, Supplier Diversity, and Workforce Diversity, aim to reduce disparities, promote fair procurement practices, enhance recruitment efforts, and support a diverse workforce that is reflective of the Columbus community.

This aligns with the Opportunity Rising Agenda, addressing 21 aspirations set by Mayor Ginther for economic stability, healthier, and safer neighborhoods.

### **2023 Highlights:**

#### **Supplier Diversity**

ODI's Supplier Diversity team has been unwavering in its commitment to amplifying the participation of minority and women-owned business enterprises in public contracting.

In 2023, the utilization of minority and women-owned businesses in city contract opportunities soared to \$89.5 million, comprising 15.24 percent of the city's total available expenditure. This impressive figure embodies our 2023 overall city diverse utilization percentage, marking the second-highest rate in Mayor Ginther's tenure.

This signals a remarkable increase of \$37.7 million, or 2.86 percent, compared to 2022's 12.49 percent. Furthermore, nearly \$74 million, representing 83 percent of the total diverse spending, was channeled into local businesses within Franklin County, amplifying economic opportunities and fostering community growth.

ODI persists in cultivating a truly equitable environment for all demographics engaged in city contracting, striving for meaningful progress and inclusive opportunities.

Several factors may have contributed to the rise in diverse spending for our supplier diversity program compared to 2022.

- The Department Directors and fiscal teams have demonstrated a strengthened commitment to supplier diversity. As exhibited by the increased diversity spending in the Department of Recreation and Parks. These steps supported a significant increase in utilization.
- We have implemented targeted outreach efforts, including signature networking events.
- Our goal-setting process has been simplified to increase transparency, accountability, and competition.
- Made updates to the City's Title 39 code to align with internal policies and to better serve Columbus's diverse business landscape.

In 2023, there were a total of 290 certifications granted to minority and women-owned businesses (MBE/WBE), comprising 82 new certifications and 208 re-certifications. Moreover, the number of vendor contract-compliant registrations processed in 2023 rose significantly, reaching 2,367, compared to the 2022 total of 1,871. Among these registrations, 1,540 were newly issued, while 827 were renewals.

#### **Google Project**

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion has been assigned to monitor and assist the Developer for Project Cyprus (Google) in meeting its requirements with the City of Columbus. The agreement states that the Developer will use commercially reasonable, good faith efforts to spend a minimum of 15% of the total value of available eligible expenditures on the Projects ("GOAL") with the City of Columbus' qualified and certified Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) businesses or other similarly certified consultants, contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers.

The first building on the campus (CLB1) has bought out 100% of its contracts with 39 MWVBes. \$86M of the eligible \$398M is being spent with MWVBes, totaling 22% utilization. As scopes reach completion, there will be a true-up in cost, which may cause the overall value to adjust slightly, but the overall spending percentage should remain the same.

The second building (CLB2) is approximately 75% bought out. To date, 15 contracts have been issued to MWBEs with a projected spend of \$57 million of the eligible \$318 million, totaling 18% utilization.

We have started preliminary work on the projects listed below, and we will aggressively engage in outreach and engagement to meet the goals assigned by our office. We are now having the City Departments partner with our office to achieve greater utilization growth for the City.

- The Municipal Court House
- The real-time Crime Center Campus
- Community Sports Park projects
- The 4th Water Treatment plants

## Outreach & Engagement

The office coordinated informative outreach events involving multiple departments to discuss the City's new Supplier Diversity Program MBE/WBE requirements and facilitate networking opportunities for Prime and subcontractors.

Several significant gatherings were organized to support businesses and enhance their prospects. Efforts were concentrated on uniting small businesses, vendors, and City departments including Recreation and Parks, Finance and Management, Development, Public Service, and Public Utilities. Two successful events were hosted at the Franklin Park Adventure Center and Lower.com Crew Stadium, drawing over 100 attendees.

## Workforce Diversity

In 2023 the City of Columbus saw advancements in employee engagement throughout the organization. The City's expansive workforce, comprising 10,140 employees, is steadfastly dedicated to nurturing a positive work culture and enhancing employee well-being.

The City's Workforce Dashboards illustrate significant progress in establishing a workplace that is more diverse and inclusive. Since 2022 the City's racially and ethnically diverse workforce has increased from 30.87% to 33.70%.

Collaborating closely with the Department of Technology, ODI meticulously gathers, evaluates, and presents workforce data encompassing factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, salary, and bargaining unit affiliation.

## Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):

In 2022, 1,861 city employees participated in the Employee Engagement Survey, providing valuable insights. The ODI Director and Assistant Director shared survey results with each department director and introduced the next steps in employee engagement.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion officially announced the launch of five Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) in July of 2023. Employees Resource Group's objective is to provide a platform for employees to connect, share experiences, and contribute to a more inclusive workplace. The current ERGs consist of:

- B.L.A.C.C. (Black Leaders Achieving through Commitment & Change) members
- Veterans
- Nosotros (LatinX)
- All Out (LGBTQ)
- W.I.N. (Women's Initiative Network)

Throughout 2023, these Employee Resource Groups collectively registered over 380 employees.

Language Access: We collaborated with city departments to assess language access needs.

Certified Welcoming City: The City of Columbus aims to achieve Certified Welcoming City designation in 2024 which will highlight and establish inclusive policies and programs. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion oversees the evaluation and tracking of designation requirements.

## Opportunity Rising Equity Agenda

ODI has played a significant role in supporting the Mayor's efforts to create a more equitable City through a multifaceted approach. Under the guidance of our Equity team, the office has developed a comprehensive three-part framework aimed at advancing equity. This includes a results-based accountability methodology, the development of a collective equity tool, and a common glossary of terms. This framework was created and will be advanced through a collaborative effort with all City Departments involved. The approval of the equity framework by Mayor Ginther highlights its importance. In addition, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion achieved the following:

- Established a system to collect and interpret disaggregated data using smart sheets to support equity work and foster collaboration among team members.
- Showcased the Equity Framework at the City of Columbus HR Conference

# **CelebrateOne**

## **2023 Annual Report**



### **Infant Mortality Declines, Doula and Pregnancy Test Kit Programs Launched in 2023**

Driven by the vision of a future where every baby in Franklin County, regardless of zip code, race or family income, thrives and celebrates his or her first birthday, CelebrateOne works collaboratively to reduce infant mortality and achieve racial and health equity in the county.

2023 Impact:

- Reduced: Franklin County infant mortality rate fell to 7 deaths per 1,000 live births, from 8 in 2022
- Decreased: Black infant mortality saw a slight decrease to 12.4 deaths per 1,000 live births, from 13 in 2022
- Reduced: Sleep-related infant deaths from 28 in 2022 to 21 in 2023.
- Served: 3,554 women through partner organizations
- Distributed: 2,176 free cribs, in partnership with Columbus Public Health, to families in need, exceeding the 2023 goal of 1,700
- Trained: 1,190 safe sleep ambassadors, in partnership with Columbus Public Health, exceeding the 2023 goal of 1,000
- Reached: Over 10,000 teens, in partnership with Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio, with sexual health education programs

### **Infant Mortality Rate Decreases**

In 2023, Franklin County witnessed encouraging progress in reducing infant mortality rates (IMR). The overall IMR dropped to 7 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to 8 in 2022. This positive shift represents a significant step forward, even amidst a decline in the overall birthrate.

While progress was made, it was not made equally. Though Black infant mortality rates demonstrated modest improvements, decreasing to 12.4 deaths per 1,000 live births down from 13 in the previous year, the disparity gap widened. In 2022, two black babies died for every white baby. In 2023, four black babies died for every white baby. This disparity highlights the necessity for continued work to mitigate the many manifestations of racism and bias that Franklin County's Black families' experience.

CelebrateOne acknowledges the crucial role community engagement played in achieving these outcomes. Throughout the year, the organization actively engaged with residents, raising awareness about maternal and child health issues and facilitating access to essential services in at-risk communities. This collaborative approach, focused on education, support and resource provision, is lowering IMR and fostering improved overall health outcomes in Franklin County. CelebrateOne plans to accelerate our work, lean into the interventions that have a track record of success and lead innovation in areas that need more support.

CelebrateOne remains committed to the relentless pursuit of our vision to be a community where every child, regardless of background, has the opportunity to thrive.

### **Empowering Women, One Pregnancy Test at a Time**

CelebrateOne launched a groundbreaking initiative to equip women with the resources they need for healthy pregnancies: free pregnancy test kits readily available at the Columbus Metropolitan Main Library and 16 branches across the city.

Launched in June 2023, the program has seen remarkable success. By year-end, a total of 1,091 test kits were picked up, highlighting the significant need and positive response from the community. A test kit includes two pregnancy tests.

Why is this initiative so important? One in three expectant mothers delays or forgoes prenatal care altogether. This delay can have devastating consequences, including increased risks of childbirth complications, preterm births and infant mortality. CelebrateOne encourages women who learn they are pregnant to seek immediate medical care.

### **CelebrateOne Launches Doula Program**

Recognizing the critical role doulas play in supporting healthy pregnancies and births, CelebrateOne launched a new program in 2023 to connect at-risk mothers, particularly Black mothers who experience disproportionately high infant mortality rates, with qualified doulas.

Funded by a grant from the Ohio Department of Medicaid, this initiative aims to address the lack of access to holistic support during pregnancy and childbirth – a key factor contributing to racial disparities in birth outcomes.

Doulas provide invaluable emotional and physical support before, during, and after childbirth. This program aims to achieve several key results:

- **Improved Birth Outcomes:** Studies link doula support to reduced C-section rates, less reliance on pain medication and lower incidence of postpartum depression among mothers, while also improving breastfeeding success.
- **Empowering Mothers:** Doulas equip mothers with crucial information, emotional support and advocacy throughout their pregnancy and birth journey, fostering increased confidence and decision-making power.
- **Reduced Racial Disparities:** By prioritizing high-risk zip codes, this program specifically targets the gap in doula service access and contributes to achieving racial health equity.

By offering doula services and working collaboratively with community partners, CelebrateOne strives to ensure that every baby, regardless of zip code or background, has the opportunity to thrive and celebrate his or her first birthday and beyond. This program represents a significant step towards creating a future where all mothers and babies in Franklin County have access to the support they need for healthy pregnancies and positive birth experiences.

### **A Vital Presence in Far East Columbus**

CelebrateOne is set to become a vital presence in the far east side of Columbus.

Through a collaboration with the Mid-Ohio Food Collective (MOFC), CelebrateOne will establish itself within a section of the 67,000 square foot building that MOFC will operate near Refugee and Hamilton Roads—the former Kroger store.

Danielle Tong, executive director of CelebrateOne, expressed enthusiasm about the partnership's potential to provide essential support and services, especially for families in the 43232 zip code who often lack access to prenatal care.

Prenatal care plays a crucial role in averting complications and educating expectant mothers on safeguarding their infants and ensuring a healthy pregnancy. With the high infant mortality rate in this neighborhood, providing accessible and comprehensive support is paramount.

The site is expected to open in 2025.

**Department of Building and  
Zoning Services  
2023 Annual Report**

As the city of Columbus continues its upward trajectory, the building industry continues to work through a tight labor market, challenging lending climate and other hurdles that slowed development in 2023. The Department of Building and Zoning Services (BZS) felt these headwinds in 2023, though the city continues to see strong population growth. A big positive in 2023 was the growth of more infill development versus greenfield development. That trend shows signs of continuing into the foreseeable future as the department completes a number of innovative initiatives.

The Department of Building and Zoning Services is organized into five distinct, yet interrelated, activities: Building Permits and Inspections, Zoning, Site Engineering, Customer Service, and the Division of Code Enforcement.

#### Building Permits and Inspections

The Building Section which includes plan review, permits, and inspections is the largest section of the Department. The Building Section consists of administrative staff, plans examiners, and inspectors, all of which totaled 90 full time positions for 2023. Within this section, applications for building permits are reviewed to ensure compliance with both the Ohio Building Code and the Columbus Building Code. Once a permit application has been issued, construction can begin in accordance with the scope of work outlined in the approved permit. Inspections are conducted at various points throughout construction to confirm that the work performed conforms to the approved permit.

#### Permits

The City of Columbus issues building permits for many different types of construction. Permits are issued for work performed in residential, commercial, and multi-family structures, tents, graphics, and festivals. A permit can represent a wide array of projects, from the installation of a hot water heater to the construction of twenty story high rise. In each case, a permit must be issued before work can begin to ensure that the scope of work will result in a structure that is code compliant and safe to occupy.

- Over 45,000 permits were issued in 2023, keeping pace with permitting volume from 2022
- Multi-Family permitting continued to display robust activity with nearly 4,600 issuances, similar to 2022
- Residential permitting also continued to display similar activity to 2022 totals with almost 33,000 issuances. A slight increase over 2022

#### Expedited Plans Review

Expedited Plans Review allows applicants with qualifying projects to accelerate the timeframe for approval of building plans. A faster plan approval affords the applicant the opportunity to begin construction on an accelerated time table. This program has been regarded as a successful, customer-focused innovation since its implementation in 2015. The continued strong use of these reviews can be attributed to customers becoming more comfortable with our electronic plan review system.

- Nearly 500 expedited reviews were conducted in 2023
- Expedited review activity did decreased 17% when compared to 2022 levels

#### Online Permitting and Other Services

Online permitting has been a focus for the Department for several years. First undertaken in 2011, BZS continues to add more services to the suite of options available online. Customers have found value with the service and continue to utilize it frequently.

- Over 34,000 permits were issued online in 2023
- Online permits accounted for nearly 75% of all permits issued in 2023
- Online permitting activity increased from 2022 totals

The ongoing electronic plan review initiative which allows for a paperless plan review and approval continued to expand in 2023 as staff began to have the ability to review and make changes electronically. A process that allows customers to see comments in nearly real time.

- Similar to 2022, 55% of eligible expedited reviews were initiated online and digitally reviewed
- About 94% of final site compliance plans were applied for using the online portal

The usage of our automated inspection scheduling remained high in 2023 as customers found value in being able to schedule inspections through a voice response system or through online portal. More than 90% are scheduled directly by our customers.

Moving inspection scheduling into the automated realm freed up staff time to fulfil other department duties. Their transition to the department call center ensure 95% of customer calls each day are answered live.

### Inspections

Over 60 employees comprise the inspections team at BZS. Regardless of weather and conditions, building inspectors set out each day to review construction projects in the field. The inspection process is integral to the safety of the built environment, as inspectors validate that completed work is building code compliant and consistent with the approved scope of work. A quick and timely completion of inspections allows a project to stay on schedule and keeping moving forward. The inspections section continues to innovate and find creative methods to ensure that inspections can be done safely and efficiently.

- Roughly 87,500 inspections were completed in 2023, which results in a 5% increase from the previous year
- In 2023, inspection requests were completed within one business day 99.99% of the time.

### Building Compliance

The Building Compliance team investigates reports of unsafe buildings, buildings damaged by fire or vehicle impact, unlicensed contractors and work performed without permits that may threaten the general safety of the public. The Building Compliance Section inspects both residential and commercial properties while working closely with local authorities, contractors, property owners and other city departments to bring these properties into compliance.

- In 2023, a total of 1,408 service requests were initiated and examined, marking a reduction of nearly 400 requests in comparison to 2022. In 2023, more than 157 Notice of Violation orders were issued.
- Unsafe Building orders written totaled nearly 355 for the entirety of 2023
- The 2023 total marked an 8% decrease over 2022
- The Department wrote 12 Emergency Hazard orders
- Overall, the Building Compliance team closed or complied 510 of their orders and closed roughly 1,500 service requests.

### Zoning

Within the City of Columbus exists various zoning districts that contain regulations governing land use and sets standards for building height, location, as well as other components of design. Zoning districts assist with community planning goals, separate conflicting land uses, and enable stable and predictable growth throughout the city. The Zoning Section consists of two distinct, yet interconnected functions – Zoning Clearance and Zoning Public Hearings.

### Zoning Clearance

The process of zoning clearance determines if a site plan application or building permit application meets the standards of the underlying zoning district, or is permitted by a variance, special permit, or decision from an appeal. A building permit cannot be issued and construction cannot commence until zoning clearance is established.

- Zoning Clearance staff conducted reviews for 578 Final Site Compliance applications
- Staff participated in 253 preliminary site compliance reviews and meetings throughout 2023, a slight increase over 2022
- In 2023, 966 zoning-clearance-only reviews and preliminary reviews were completed this past year, a slight decrease from 2022.

### Zoning Public Hearings

The Zoning Public Hearings staff accepts and processes applications for Zoning Code variances and changes to the City of Columbus Zoning Map, which is known as a rezoning. Variance requests can take many forms, from changes to setback requirements, building height, and parking requirements to name a few. Rezonings allow the applicant to change the underlying zoning district of the property, which can affect how the property is used and may alter standards governing design and construction. All requests for variances and rezonings culminate in a public vote of approval by either Columbus City Council, the Board of Zoning Adjustment, or the Graphics Commission – for variances related to design standards and locations of signs.

- Applications for rezonings and variances totaled more than 440 for calendar year 2023
- Overall, there was a decrease in the total number of applications in the Zoning Public Hearing section for 2023. Rezoning's accounted for roughly 17% of the public hearings volume in 2023 with a total of 76 applications

- Council Variance applications totaled more than 158 for 2023, representing about 35% of the public hearing applications submitted
- Applications for Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) variances decreased slightly for 2023
- 157 BZA variance applications were filed in 2023, a 11% decrease over 2022
- Representing 35% of the public hearing case load
- Applications to the Graphics Commission, which provides commercial sign variances throughout the city, accounted for about 11% of all public hearing applications in 2023
- Applications to the Graphics Commission in 2023 remained the same from the previous year, totaling 51 applications

#### Site Engineering

The Site Engineering section serves as a clearinghouse for various plans related to the private development process. After being submitted to BZS, plans for Street Construction, Storm Water, Storm Sewer, and others that relate to private development are routed to multiple review agencies for approval. The Site Engineering section coordinates reviews from divisions within the Department of Public Utilities, the Department of Public Service, Recreation and Parks Department, the Department of Public Safety, as well as reviewers in the Department of Building and Zoning Services. Once all necessary engineered plans are reviewed and approved, the Department will issue Final Site Compliance approval. When required, a building permit cannot be issued until Final Site Compliance approval has been obtained.

- Nearly 580 applications for Final Site Compliance were submitted in 2023
- Submittals were up 6% from the previous year
- Over 250 Preliminary Site Compliance applications were routed and reviewed in 2023
- Only 8 applications for preliminary and final plat applications were received in 2023
- New applications for street construction plans totaled 91 for this past year
- Over 350 applications were received and routed for storm water and sanitary sewers plans in 2023
- 103 applications for lots splits were reviewed and processed this past year

#### Customer Service

The Customer Service Center:

- Served more than 19,000 customers
- Maintained an average wait time of just under 8 and a half minutes
- Nearly 75% of customers waited less than 10 minutes

Overall customer visits to our front counter are still well below pre pandemic numbers. Many of the low contact innovations the department initiated in response to the pandemic, such as online permitting, online payments, and contact free plans pickup and drop-off, manifested in fewer daily customer visits to our front counter. Given the popularity of those new services, the department plans to continue to make them available and to invest in further enhancements. The department believes it to be unlikely that the pre-pandemic level of in-person customer activity will return in the future.

#### Code Enforcement Division

In 2023, Code Enforcement continued to integrate into BZS and augment our abilities as a regulatory department.

- Receiving service requests from numerous sources including 311 that resulted in 39,500 potential violations to city code
- Conducted roughly 87,000 inspections based upon service requests and follow up inspections connected to issued violations, increasing by 6% over 2022

#### Initiatives

The department continues to refine and grow the city's building energy benchmarking reporting program. In conjunction with Sustainable Columbus the department coordinates with the public utility providers that service the City to notify and work with regulated building owners in an effort to help them file their inaugural energy utilization report. BZS will continue to administer this necessary and informative program, with the goal of generating actionable data to make the built environment across the City more energy efficient.

The Department of Building and Zoning Services made significant strides in another of Mayor Ginther's priorities: to evaluate and update the City of Columbus Zoning Code. The last comprehensive Zoning Code update occurred in the 1950's. It has become increasingly clear that despite the best efforts by Building and Zoning staff, the code is ill-equipped to handle the demands of growth that have emerged over the last decade. Toward that end, the department, in conjunction with the Department of Development, engaged a nationally recognized zoning consultant team and established a Zoning Advisory Committee, to begin the process of re writing the zoning code to reflect the development trends the city is seeing each day. The project's primary goal in 2023 was stakeholder engagement. To achieve this the team conversation with all area commissions and numerous civic associations. We also engage in 18 community conversations and workshop meetings held throughout the city. In addition, mailed notices to more than 80,000 Columbus citizens that live or own property along the commercial corridors schedule to be re zoned in 2024. As dozens of new residents move in each day, it is important the new code reflect the need to develop new housing in an efficient and timely fashion.

#### Summary

2023 was a successful year for the Department of Building and Zoning Services on many fronts. The department continues its efforts to work with the building industry to move plans through our approval processes in an efficient and timely fashion. The department is working to meet the demands of the building industry and the community as more and more people flock to central Ohio. The Division of Code Enforcement is successfully integrating into the department. And the first phase of the zoning code update is well underway after nearly seven decades. This past year laid the groundwork for future successes of the department and the City at large. The Department of Building and Zoning Services will begin 2024 ready to further those important initiatives and activities, in service of its mission: to build a safe and sustainable City where neighborhoods thrive.

# **Department of Public Service 2023 Annual Report**



## **The Department of Public Service**

The Department of Public Service mission is to deliver unparalleled city services to enhance mobility, safety, and quality of life. These essential services are delivered by the department's approximately 700 employees in the Director's Office and five divisions: Design and Construction, Infrastructure Management, Mobility and Parking Services, Refuse Collection and Traffic Management.

### **The Director's Office**

The Office of Support Services managed the department's 2023 annual operating budget of more than \$187 million and capital budget of \$131 million for job-creating infrastructure projects. The office advertised 34 construction projects and 23 requests for proposals. It created 126 purchase orders for capital projects, 35 modifications, and 253 ordinances for professional services and construction contracts.

Through hands-on safety education and training, the Human Resources and Safety Group saw fewer recordable workplace injuries in 2023 than in previous years. Lost work days due to injuries reduced 62%. Human Resources also developed a "Promotional Pathways" document to help Public Service employees better understand and explore opportunities for promotion and career growth. In 2023, Human Resources managed an average of almost 20 new hires, transfers or promotions each month—about one per workday.

The Data Solutions and Compliance Group rolled out the department's Infrastructure Asset Management Plan, with clean data for improved management of the city's infrastructure and data-driven investment decisions. The Asset Information Management System (AIMS) was implemented, providing a one-stop shop portal for staff access to infrastructure data. A Traffic Counting Program was implemented to support traffic studies, mobility research and safety impact studies.

The department's Right-of-Way Permits Section continued to improve operations. A Columbus City Code update in 2023 gives investigators the authority to issue citations for violations impacting the public right of way. The CLOSE program to track lane and street closures and roadway steel plate locations created alerts for Columbus City Schools and others to support communication on impacts that affect roadway users.

In 2023, the department's Communications Office managed and responded to hundreds of media requests, 311 service requests and other interactions with residents, area commissions and neighborhood groups, including for public meetings and engagement on department initiatives and design and construction of infrastructure projects.

The communications team continued to expand community reach through the department's social media platforms in 2023, with informative posts and campaigns such as My Buddy Charles and Public Service Behind the Scenes videos. Nearly 5 million total impressions and 66,000+ post interactions were achieved across all platforms.

### **Division of Design and Construction**

The Division of Design and Construction is a trusted and respected regional leader delivering high quality workmanship. It is charged with planning and bringing to life infrastructure and roadway improvements that protect the safety of pedestrians and motorists, improve quality of life, and support the city's economic vitality.

Construction project highlights include several major roadway improvements substantially completed in 2023:

- \$16.9 million S. Hamilton Road project, from Groves Road to Helsel Park, with storm water and intersection improvements, new through lane, shared-use path and sidewalk
- \$18.5 million N. Hamilton Road project, south of Morse Road to north of Preserve Boulevard., to improve intersections and add a through lane, shared-use path and sidewalk
- \$9.6 million intersection improvements project at Hilliard Rome Road at Feder/Fisher Road, with sidewalk and bike lanes added
- \$9.3 million Scioto Peninsula Roadway Improvements Phase 1 project, including improved storm sewer, street lighting, landscaping features, granite curb, sidewalks, paver parking, and permeable paver roadways
- \$7.7 million Refugee Road pedestrian improvements project to add sidewalk and a shared-use path between Winchester Pike and Hamilton Road, plus a bridge replacement, curb ramps, storm sewers and a regional storm water detention basin
- \$21 million Confluence Village Garage project, with a 5-story parking structure serving Astor Park area residents, workers and visitors, and construction of the New Cahill Drive public roadway

In 2023, the Construction Section administered the city's \$20.2 million street resurfacing program to repave 158 streets, construct 1.25 miles of sidewalk and install 502 ADA-compliant curb ramps. Through the program, two citywide ADA projects totaling \$3.2 million (\$1.6 million in CDBG funding) were administered to construct 792 ADA-compliant curb ramps and fill almost 1 mile of sidewalk gaps.

Other roadway construction projects progressed in 2023, including:

- \$19 million Hudson Street, I-71 to Cleveland Avenue, project to reconstruct the roadway, add new sidewalk and shared-use path and make several other infrastructure improvements, for completion by late 2024.
- \$12.9 million Front Street and Marconi Boulevard project began to convert both streets to two-way traffic—Front from Broad Street to Hickory Street and Marconi from Broad Street to Spring Street. Upgrades include new traffic signals, granite curb, buff wash sidewalk, street and pedestrian lighting, enhanced pedestrian crossings and landscaping.
- \$9 million UIRF Milo Grogan Second Avenue improvements project started construction to install new sidewalks, curb ramps and extensions, street trees, permeable paver parking, street lighting with underground conduits and retaining wall improvements.
- \$10.4 million Columbus Traffic Signal System Phase F for installation of 50 miles of fiber optic cable to connect traffic signals to the signal system and connected vehicle environment.

In 2023, the department's In-House Design Section completed design work and construction plans for projects totaling more than \$43 million. Projects highlights included:

- Three citywide resurfacing projects totaling \$34.4 million that repaved 136 lane miles on 209 streets, and constructed 788 ADA curb ramps; a separate \$1 million citywide ADA curb ramp project included 250 new ramps.
- An additional citywide ADA Ramp – CDBG Curb Ramps project included 226 ramps, 3,760 feet of sidewalk connections plus 34 more ramps for the project's CDBG/Sidewalk Gaps work. Both CDBG projects consisted of \$2.3 million of work.
- The citywide Crack Seal and Slurry Seal project for \$2.2 million of work was designed in-house to treat 278 streets encompassing 278 lane miles of preventive maintenance.

#### Division of Infrastructure Management

The Division of Infrastructure Management strives to positively and efficiently manage the city's essential infrastructure to promote the mobility, safety and well-being of residents and visitors. The division's committed workforce is cross-trained in the complex day-to-day maintenance of roadways and other right-of-way infrastructure while also proactively planning improvements for a growing city.

The Pavement Management Section planned for paving of approximately 250 streets, valued at \$37.2 million, for the city's 2023 resurfacing program. Pavement Management also planned for the 2023 preventive maintenance contract, valued at \$2 million to crack seal approximately 115 streets and slurry seal about 135 streets. The Surface Drainage Program managed 41 locations, and 32 applications were managed for the Curb Repair and Reimbursement Program.

In 2023, the division's right-of-way investigators investigated 9,221 service requests, performed approximately 5,300 right-of-way inspections and completed approximately 214 guardrail/fence repair work orders. The Right-of-Way Section managed approximately 103 active sidewalk dining leases; received approximately 50 right-of-way dedications for public roadways; and released easements or allowed private encroachments onto public right of way on at least 15 projects. The sidewalk program completed more than 22,400 square feet of repairs at 280 locations and made 1,396 sidewalk concrete cuts to mitigate trip hazards.

The Bridge Management Section inspected 311 bridges within the right of way. The Section also reviewed 3,026 special hauling permit applications. The Parsons Avenue Retaining Wall rehabilitation project was completed to restore the structures to an excellent condition. General and routine maintenance was performed at 34 bridge and retaining wall locations.

2023 Street Maintenance by the numbers:

- Made 51 general repair pavement projects
- Completed surface treatment of 177 alleys and 28 alley lane miles; sealed 4,000 feet of roadway cracks
- Completed 7,990 internal and 311 service requests for pothole patching
- Collected 5,400 tons of right-of-way debris, swept 21,400 roadway curb and serviced 111 graffiti locations
- Serviced 13,000 lane miles of roadway for snow and ice control

#### Division of Mobility and Parking Services

The Division of Mobility and Parking Services is committed to providing accessible, equitable, and predictable mobility and parking options for all residents, guests and visitors. We aim to manage congestion, increase mobility options and operate parking in a growing city. The division administers, enforces, operates, and manages public parking and the shared mobility program in the City of Columbus. In addition, Mobility and Parking Services coordinates traffic calming and leads multimodal corridor and Complete Streets project planning.

The division was formally renamed Mobility and Parking Services in 2023 to reflect its expanded transportation planning focus that will collaboratively enhance the mobility and parking experience throughout the city.

Parking Services implemented a new Citation Processing and Permit Management System that includes upgraded equipment technology. The \$1.5 million system conversion completed the last major phase of the city's parking system modernization to replace a 30+-year-old system.

Other 2023 highlights:

- The ParkColumbus payment app achieved an adoption rate of approximately 90%, successfully supported by the department's My Buddy Charles marketing campaign.
- The Downtown Multimodal Transportation Study launched in conjunction with LinkUS Bus Rapid Transit planning.
- The Bike Plus planning initiative also launched and had more than 5,000 touchpoints and opportunities for input.
- The new Astor Park parking garage operated by the division was partially opened for use for Columbus Crew home games.
- An e-scooter parking corral was piloted in Harrison West and Downtown to support proper parking that doesn't interfere with ADA and sidewalk access for pedestrians.
- The Mobility Enterprise Fund performed above projections.

2023 by the numbers:

- Maintained approximately 12,000 paid on-street parking spaces, including 150 parking kiosks, 230 parking meters and more than 100 mobile pay only zones
- Managed over 3,500 off-street structured parking spaces
- Issued nearly 12,000 parking permits
- Issued 145,000 parking citations
- Installed 59 residential ADA parking spaces
- Managed 122 loading and 30 valet zones
- Saved more than 24 tons in greenhouse gas emissions at EV chargers
- Managed three shared mobility device vendors operating 4,250+ e-scooter devices

#### Division of Refuse Collection

The Division of Refuse Collection is committed to providing a clean and safe environment for all residents and visitors. It is a regional and national leader in promoting cleaner neighborhoods and using taxpayer dollars efficiently to better serve our community. It provided weekly trash collection to an average of 355,000 households, in addition to weekly recycling, biweekly yard waste collection and scheduled bulk pickup.

In 2023, the division collected 302,854 tons of municipal solid waste, 10,409 tons of bulk items, 5,617 tons of illegal dumping and 2,510 tires weighing more than 26 tons. The residential recycling service collected 32,516 tons of residential recyclable materials and 21,427 tons of yard waste.

Refuse Collection added mid-shift collection crews to work Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., serving neighborhoods identified with excess trash and debris. Some Solid Waste Investigators now also work these hours to provide greater enforcement in addressing illegal dumping.

The division opened the city's first Waste and Reuse Convenience Center to make it easier for Columbus residents to drop off trash, bulk items, recyclables, food scraps, yard waste materials and some items that cannot be disposed through the city's residential collection services. Furniture,

clothing and bicycles can be donated at the Convenience Center. The new center, open Tuesday through Saturday, supports the city's Climate Action Plan goals to reduce landfilled waste and illegal dumping and support new recycling streams. A second center is set to open in 2024.

Refuse Collection continued to convert remaining 300-gallon shared residential trash containers to 90-gallon containers for individual households. In 2023, 11,085 households were converted. The conversion is part of Mayor Ginther's focus on ending illegal dumping and cleaning up alley debris and litter.

In 2023, the division's Keep Columbus Beautiful program managed 792 litter cleanups performed by 11,564 volunteers who committed nearly 30,000 hours of service. Volunteers picked up 365,637 pounds of litter in their neighborhoods and throughout Columbus.

#### Division of Traffic Management

The Division of Traffic Management provides safe mobility options in a growing city that connect residents and visitors to opportunities and improve quality of life. The Division applies a holistic, uniform, and consistent approach to managing the city's complex congestion and safety concerns, while respecting the unique nature of city neighborhoods.

In 2023, the division was awarded \$3.35 million in ODOT High Safety Improvement Program funds to assist in two intersection projects, at Roberts Road and Spindler/Frazell roads and at Refugee Road and Hines Road. The division is instrumental in implementing Vision Zero Columbus Action Plan strategies to end crash deaths and make safety the top priority for all users of city streets.

#### 2023 highlights and by the numbers:

##### Traffic Maintenance

- Installed 894 signs throughout the city
- Installed a traffic calming project on Eastmoor Boulevard
- Installed a pedestrian hybrid beacon crosswalk signal at Rich and McDowell streets for use by Pilot Dog students and other pedestrians
- Supported Vision Zero Columbus by refurbishing 15 signalized intersections, installing 57 new crosswalks, inspecting 155 school signal/flashers, and installing reduced 25 MPH speed limit signs Downtown

##### Traffic Control

The Traffic Control team wrote 1,962 traffic sign work orders, 190 pavement marking work orders and 91 school zone work orders.

##### ITS Operations

- Completed fiber network restructuring work for 29 traffic signals and one node redundant path
- Brought 16 traffic signals online with Centrac and 11 CCTV cameras online with Milestone
- Implemented 17,934 traffic signal timing changes through Centrac
- Connected 27 battery backup power monitors and 8 battery backup power inverters to the fiber network
- Processed 9,098 Centrac system alerts
- Processed 138 requests for traffic signal timing
- Inspected 23 overhead freeway sign structures on SR 161
- Completed project to replace 10 overhead freeway guide signs on SR 315
- Provided standards and approved locations for new Adopt-A-Highway program

##### Traffic Signal Operations

- Connected 126 intersections with Wavetronix Click 650/656 cabinet interface units to the Columbus Traffic Signal System, allowing for remote monitoring of radar units at these intersections
- Managed and oversaw the signal retiming project Downtown for 137 traffic signals
- Retimed 16 signals over two corridors
- Installed a Leading Pedestrian Interval safety feature at 7 traffic signals and developed an LPI policy
- Coordinated crime cameras installation at traffic signal locations with the Department of Safety
- Processed 1,215 traffic signal operations and maintenance-related 311 service requests

##### Development Studies

In 2023, the Development Review Section represented the department at 55 public hearings of City Council, the Development Commission and the Board of Zoning Adjustment; reviewed 263 rezoning and council variance ordinances and 84 rezoning applications; and completed reviewed of 105 traffic impact or traffic access studies, 263 rezoning/City Council variance applications, 152 BZA applications and 48 Graphics Commission applications.

Traffic Management also completed 167 in-house traffic counts and worked on 88 traffic studies.

# **Department of Development 2023 Annual Report**

The Department of Development uses resources to create new affordable housing, improve wages, foster more inclusive communities and stabilize families facing eviction and those experiencing homelessness. The department supports the implementation of the Columbus Housing Strategy and promotes equitable, inclusive growth well into our future.

## 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 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.

## 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 homebuilding 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.

## 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.

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.

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 non-profit 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 non-profits. 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, the collaborative spirit and innovative initiatives promise a brighter future for all Columbus residents.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Columbus, a city with a rich history and a vision for the future, outlined to experience 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's 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's 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's 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's 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 opportunity 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.

## PLANNING

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.

# **Department of Public Utilities 2023 Annual Report**

Preparing for anticipated commercial and residential growth while adapting to an evolving regulatory landscape guided many decisions at the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) in 2023. Following a cost of service rate study and approvals from the Sewer and Water Advisory Board and Columbus City Council in 2022, a new rate structure went into effect in January 2023 reflecting a 4% increase for water, a 5% increase for sanitary and a 2% increase for stormwater, resulting in a 4.45% increase to the average customer bill. The department continued outreach on the Low Income Discount Program, which provides a 20% discount to qualifying water and sewer ratepayers. Since its implementation in 2006 (the initial 15% discount was increased to 20% at the beginning of 2009) the program has remained popular, ending the year with 5,816 single family home participants and an additional 1,405 families in multi-unit housing, for a total of 7,221. Also, 3,554 senior households in the Columbus water service area received an additional discount on their water bill, having water service charges waived. 215 Columbus power customers who are seniors enjoyed a 10% consumption discount on their bills. Additionally, the Division of Power continued its grant-funded Power Payment Relief program, which assists customers having difficulty paying their electric bills. In 2023, 219 families were supported with \$62,413 in funds. In total, 1,414 families have been assisted with \$385,212 in funds.

Customer service and communication remain high priorities: information is shared with customers regarding water quality and conservation, prevention of water pollution, and other notifications required by the Ohio EPA through the department website, bill inserts and other publications, customer portal, events (including RiseUp Columbus resource fairs), media, and an ever growing social media presence. Joining the department's long-standing Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) pages, a new Instagram account was added; DPU also utilizes LinkedIn to help promote job openings. A dedicated X feed updates city power customers on outages. More ratepayers joined the online Customer Portal, raising the overall total to 201,908. Portal options include paperless bills, online and auto-pay enrollment, and other features.

The long-awaited rollout of the Enhanced Meter Project to replace all of the city's aging water and power meters moved forward: neighborhood installations began in early 2023, following infrastructure preparation work and a pilot installation phase in 2022. These upgrades will bring many benefits, like increased meter accuracy, enhanced customer service, and improved operational efficiency. A customer portal is currently under design; once completed, users will have new options like setting up alert notifications for leaks. This system-wide project, initially delayed a few years due to a worldwide microchip shortage, is scheduled to run through 2026.

The DPU Emergency Preparedness Section's mission is to maintain and improve emergency response plans, train personnel for incident response, and ensure the safety and security of our critical infrastructure. During 2023, the section updated 12 plans and procedures, facilitated three scenario discussions, and developed after-action reports/improvement plans following four real-life events, drills, and exercises. In support of coordinated response efforts throughout Franklin County, DPU Emergency Preparedness represented the department on several preparedness planning committees hosted by a cross-section of city, county, regional, and state agencies.

Sustainable Columbus works to reduce climate change impact in our community to protect the environment and improve the quality of life for all – for today's residents and for future generations.

Transitioning to clean, renewable energy is a critical strategy within the Climate Action Plan, which commits our community to carbon neutrality by 2050 with at least a 45% reduction in emissions by 2030. In 2023, Sustainable Columbus joined the Division of Power (DOP) to start construction on two solar projects which collectively will generate 45 MW of electricity annually and increase the percentage of DOP's electricity sourced from renewables. For residents served by AEP Ohio, Sustainable Columbus offers Clean Energy Columbus, which provides residents with 100% clean energy at competitive rates – this voluntary aggregation program averaged 190,000 participants in 2023 and provided \$19 million in savings, or about \$25/month.

Since 2022, Sustainable Columbus has partnered with non-profit IMPACT Community Action to impart environmental justice and ensure climate benefits for communities of color, low-income residents, and women:

- Graduates of the 12-week Empowered! clean energy and climate jobs training program have obtained good-paying jobs with employers in sectors such as utilities, affordable housing manufacturing, solar panel manufacturing, construction, and weatherization. 87% of participants are from communities of color and 40% are women; in 2023 there were three cohorts with over 35 participants.
- Access to the Home Weatherization and Assistance Program (HWAP), including the Clean Clothes initiative, was expanded. In 2023 additional appliances were incorporated into the program; 80 homes received new washers and dryers, while 40 homes received new refrigerators, freezers and stoves. To date, 186 homes have benefitted from this initiative. Also, seven homes in the Linden neighborhood benefitted from home energy efficiency and repairs such as insulation, window sealing/replacement, and roof repair.

GreenSpot was established in 2008 to educate, inspire, and recognize members that adopt green practices. In 2023, GreenSpot grew to 25,735 households, businesses, and community groups through attending 52 community events, timely social media campaigns, and publishing eight newsletters. Each year the GreenSpotLight awards recognize large, medium, and small organizations for outstanding sustainability practices; the 2023 recipients were White Castle, MJ Design Associates, and Energility. The Community Backyards program, created in partnership with Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District and SWACO, offers one rebate voucher per household annually for the purchase of an approved backyard conservation item. 1,587 Columbus residents participated in 2023, earning 154 rebates for rain barrels and 658 for native plants and trees. Also, GreenSpot teamed up with Columbus Public Health, Lowe's, and Ace Iron & Metal to offer discounts to more than 70 Columbus residents who exchanged their old, gas-powered lawn mowers to be recycled in exchange for electric, environmentally friendly mowers.

Also in 2023, Sustainable Columbus – through its regulatory policy section – advocated on behalf of city water/sewer ratepayers for environmentally and fiscally responsible policies regarding Lead and Copper Rule and PFAS regulations, and assisted DOP with the development of its net metering policy.

The Division of Power (DOP) maintains 473 miles of distribution circuits, substations, and street lighting circuits throughout Columbus. DOP grew its customer base by over 1,339 new residential and commercial accounts, to an overall total of 18,329 customers. Revenue from selling municipal power allows the division to maintain and energize around 59,000 streetlights throughout Columbus, and the division is also responsible for maintaining the Ohio Department of Transportation's freeway lights on major highways within the city.

Progress on Smart Lighting projects continued. The Linden Pilot area construction is complete; construction on Hilltop Phase One, to convert 3,794 street lights to light emitting diode (LED) and connect them to the smart lighting control system, is 75% complete and estimated to finish by mid-2024. Design for Phase Two, on the southeast side, is 95% complete and anticipated to start construction in 2025. Phase Three design is in procurement and expected to begin design in spring 2024. City standards require all new streetlights to be LED; also, as existing lights fail, they are replaced with LED. Finally, Smart Lighting will convert all existing high-pressure sodium lights to LED; approximately 10,300 streetlights -- roughly 18% of the city's street lighting system -- are now LED.

The division continued its commitment to Mayor Andrew J. Ginther's sustainability goals by working with Sustainable Columbus on Climate Action Plan strategies. For the year, over 60% of the division's energy came from renewable resources, including a 50% green component through power purchase contracts and the Eco-Smart Choice opt-in program, which offset 100 million kilowatt-hours of energy with zero-emission renewable energy credits. The division, along with its solar developer, brought part of the Parsons Solar site online by the end of 2023.

The division annually updates one underground and one overhead circuit to improve overall reliability; in 2023, crews also replaced or repaired over 138,000 feet of wire/cable, 2,098 streetlight luminaires, and 5,790 streetlight lamps. A Circuit Reliability Improvement project was completed; new switches and reclosers will provide additional sectionalizing capability to reduce the number of customers without power during an outage.

DOP is responsible for the Division of Water's O'Shaughnessy Dam hydroelectric unit; construction at the Hydro Turbine Facility Improvements project continued and is now 75% complete. The turbine are being reassembled, and final controls connections are being made, with substantial completion expected by the end of 2024.

Division revenues – from the sale of electricity to residential, commercial and industrial customers and from the expressway lighting contract with the State of Ohio – totaled \$88,935,192 while expenditures totaled \$92,248,003.

The Division of Sewerage and Drainage (DOSD) is responsible for various vital services including the treatment of wastewater generated in the City of Columbus and 25 contracting communities, maintaining the sewer collection system in Columbus, stormwater management, and surface water quality protection.

## Blueprint Columbus

Blueprint Columbus is the alternative to portions of the Wet Weather Management Plan, submitted to the Ohio EPA in 2005 to address sewer overflows and consent orders with the state in 2002 and 2004. The final Blueprint integrated plan was approved by the agency in 2015, and utilizes greener alternatives to solving wet weather problems instead of building more costly sewer tunnels or “gray solutions.” The four main strategies, or pillars, of the plan include: residential home sewer lateral lining, roof water redirection, sump pumps, and green infrastructure.

Three Blueprint Columbus lateral lining projects were under construction in the North Linden 1 project area during 2023. The lining of laterals addresses stormwater infiltration into the city’s sewer system by sealing leaking joints and cracked pipes, thereby reducing the number and volume of overflows during wet weather events. The three projects rehabilitated over 1,000 laterals throughout 2023; two projects will be completed before the end of 2024, the third project will be completed in 2025, and a fourth project will begin in 2024.

Blueprint also began construction in the Hilltop 1 project area in 2023. In preparation, the outreach team attended various events throughout the spring and summer, including its own community construction kickoff meeting for Westgate green infrastructure in July. This public meeting attracted a record-breaking 250+ attendees and generated a very positive perception of the project. To cap off the year, the outreach team spent a day at the Hilltop YMCA prepping boxes of food for the holiday giveaway. For more information, please visit [www.columbus.gov/Blueprint](http://www.columbus.gov/Blueprint).

## Sewer System Engineering Capital Improvements

- Lower Olentangy Tunnel (LOT): As part of the city’s plan to achieve consent decree requirements, a new, 12-foot diameter sanitary overflow tunnel will connect with three existing sewers: the Franklin Main, the Olentangy Main, and the Olentangy Scioto Interceptor Sewer (OSIS). LOT will continue north from the upstream end of the previously constructed OSIS Augmentation and Relief Sewer tunnel at Vine Street, ending north of Lane Avenue at Tuttle Park. A 90” diameter microtunnel will also be constructed to relieve the OSIS near 2nd Avenue. Several project milestones were met during 2023, involving shaft sites at Vine Street, both 2nd Avenue locations, and Tuttle Park. Additional milestones were met at the Gowdy Field site through the installation of the 36” Kinnear Subtrunk Relief sewer, and commissioning of the tunnel boring machine (TBM). Tunneling began in March, and the southern portion of the main tunnel was completed in November when the TBM reached the Vine Street shaft. The TBM was then relocated back to Gowdy Field where it will be reconditioned in preparation for beginning the northern portion of the tunnel in early 2024.
- Intermodal Sanitary Subtrunk Extension: The ISSE is an 8,500 foot long, 54” diameter extension of an existing 60” sewer that passes through the Village of Lockbourne to extend sewer services into the Northern Pickaway Joint Economic Development District. Work began in spring 2023 and was originally scheduled to be completed in spring 2025, but is on track to finish a year ahead of schedule. The ISSE was initially conceived as open cut construction; however, the design team recommended shifting to micro-tunnel construction due to numerous factors. Several positive decisions by the construction contractor have contributed to the project's efficiency, including regular communication with local stakeholders and local construction of the pipe. Despite the higher cost associated with micro-tunneling compared to open-cut, the winning contractor secured the project with a bid \$21 million dollars below the engineer’s estimate and \$24 million dollars less than the next lowest bid. Substantial completion is expected by June 2024.
- Rickenbacker Intermodal Sanitary Sewer Extension Project: This work installed approximately 6,000 feet of 15”-24” gravity sewer, allowing the elimination of the Rickenbacker Pump station. The project utilized open-cut excavation for the majority of the alignment, and jack-and-bore methods in five areas of stream and roadway crossings. Construction was substantially completed in October 2023.

## Wastewater Treatment Plants

- Jackson Pike Wastewater Treatment Plant (JPWTP): Plant screening improvements will upgrade the current mechanical screen dewatering and disposal systems, increasing process reliability during wet weather events. This project is in detailed design and is expected to start construction in late 2024. The Digester Improvements project, in preliminary design, will upgrade a 30-year old facility and economically reduce the plant’s sludge volume while producing methane fuel for boilers and electrical generation. The Cogeneration Facility project involves new generators and other equipment to provide beneficial reuse of digester biogas, which will produce about half of the total electricity used at the plant plus large amounts of boiler heat for the treatment process and buildings. This facility is expected to go online in 2024.
- Southerly Wastewater Treatment Plant (SWWTP): The Digestion Process Expansion project, due to be completed in 2025, is constructing a new, seventh digester and includes modifications to the six existing digesters. The Digestion Process Expansion Phase II project has completed preliminary design and will begin detailed design in summer 2024; this improvement will rehabilitate the acid phase digesters and add operational efficiencies to the mixing pumps. The Organics Receiving and Bioenergy Utilization Facility project completed preliminary design; this project, scheduled to begin construction at the end of 2024, will add two, 3-million gallon digesters, a gas cleaning and cogeneration facility, and a fats/oils/grease/organic food waste facility. The Main Drain Alternative Pipe Route improvement, key to safeguarding the facility from flood damage, will provide control to flow entering the plant as well as a

means to minimize flow backups into the plant's main drain system. This project is in detailed design and is expected to start construction at the end of 2024.

#### Other Wastewater Treatment Capital Improvements

- The DPU Archive/Records Storage and Sewer Maintenance Operations Center (SMOC) Locker Room Renovations will create a department-wide records archive in the former police property room at the Fairwood Avenue facility. The SMOC crew locker room will be upgraded and the HVAC system replaced, creating two-level storage with secured areas for sensitive documents. Construction begins early 2024 and is expected to finish mid-2025. The SMOC Inventory Control Consolidations project, expected to begin construction in mid-2024, will consolidate 16 separate storage rooms at Fairwood plus adding shelving and an inventory receiving area, while also renovating and adding office space. This project also includes installing fiber optic to the Emig Road facility and updates to the Matrix system at SMOC.
- The Compost Facility Odor Control Improvements project, currently under construction with a planned completion of 2025, is the first of three facility upgrades to improve and repair facilities process, odor control, and electrical systems. Renovations to the administration building locker rooms are also underway.

The Project Dry Basement sewer backup prevention program concluded its 19th full year. 59 additional backflow valves were installed, raising the total number of installations to 1,774. This program, along with the division's preventative maintenance program, has demonstrated success in reducing occurrences of basement sewer backups.

Crews from the Sewer Maintenance Operations Center performed 1,120 repairs along the system's estimated 4,648 miles of sanitary, storm, and combined sewer lines. Flows treated at the two wastewater treatment plants resulted in a combined average of 173 MGD; precipitation for the year totaled 41".

The Sanitary Enterprise Fund collected \$345,063,327 in revenue and expended \$316,973,194. The Stormwater Enterprise Fund collected \$48,639,605 in revenue and expended \$39,280,229.

Division of Water (DOW) staff ensure an ample supply of safe drinking water to what continues to be one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States. The well-being of our citizens and quality of life in our community depends on the consistent quality and supply of water for domestic, commercial and industrial use.

During 2023, 53 billion gallons of potable water, in accordance with all state and federal drinking water standards, was delivered to customers in the Columbus metropolitan area. With an estimated service area population of 1,383,417, the average per-capita consumption was 105 gallons per day. Total daily water pumpage averaged 145.1 million gallons.

#### Water Treatment Plants

- Dublin Road Water Plant: Construction on the Clarifier Improvements project continued, including installation of new flocculation drives, installation of new clarifier mechanisms, and concrete repair work throughout the basins. Bids were received and construction started on the Laboratory Improvements project, and design was completed on the Caustic Feed Improvements project.
- Hap Cremean Water Plant: The Intake and Low Head Dam Improvements project achieved substantial completion, and its new gripper rake system began operation. Construction continued on the Basin Concrete Rehabilitation Part 2 projects, with concrete repair and rehabilitation work performed throughout the basin complex. Construction continued on the Pump Monitoring project, and construction started on the HCWP Hypochlorite Disinfection Improvements project.
- Parsons Avenue Water Plant: The Lockbourne Road Quarry Embankment Improvements project was completed, and construction continued on the Well Pump Replacement project. Design was completed and construction started on the Hypochlorite Disinfection Improvements project and the Lime Slaker and Soda Ash Feeder Replacement project. Design work continued on the Control Room Renovation project, and design work started on the Laboratory Renovation project.
- Fourth Water Plant: The consultant team for this new facility was selected, and a contract issued for study phase services. Under the study phase, treatment process alternatives and site layout options were evaluated, and the initial capacity of the plant was selected. Preliminary design phase services were started.

Additionally, design work began on the Residuals Dewatering Turnkey Services project, and continued with scope/fee development for the associated operating/maintenance contract. Construction continued on the Water Quality Assurance Laboratory Renovation project, where staff continued work in the temporary lab facilities while the contractor completed demolition and started on new work inside the lab.

These milestones were reached at the division's reservoirs and dams: Construction continued on the Hydroelectric Facility Improvements, including demolition work, installation of the rehabilitated turbines, installation of new electrical gear, and rehabilitation of the generators. Design of the O'Shaughnessy Dam Gatehouse Improvements project was completed and bids received for the construction contract, while design began on the Hoover Dam Improvements Part 2 project.

The division invests in existing distribution infrastructure through its Replacement and Rehabilitation (R&R) Program, which annually prioritizes replacement of water mains that require repeated maintenance to improve flow and reliability. Major R&R improvement projects in 2023 included the Varsity Avenue, Roswell Drive, Edsel Avenue, and South Weyant Avenue area projects, which totaled approximately 7.7 miles of new mains. Overall, investment legislated toward the R&R program totaled more than \$40 million. Additional investments included part three of a project to replace numerous large diameter valves on critical mains throughout the distribution system to improve reliability, and North District East Tank Painting, which included the blasting and re-painting of a 2-million gallon steel fluted column tank. The division's Main Line Repair crews repaired a total of 448 main line breaks along the 3,589 miles of pipe in the system.

Continued implementation of the Cross-Connection Control and Backflow Prevention programs have increased water use surveys on existing properties to assure proper protections are in place, with backflow prevention devices currently listed on 25,897 properties. Task-specific software has streamlined this program with the goal of protecting our water supply from backflow contamination.

The Water Enterprise Fund collected \$243,245,865 in revenue and expended \$227,419,258.

Excellent customer service remained a top priority in 2022. Customer Service Representatives answered 327,442 calls in the Customer Service Call Center regarding various water, sewer, stormwater, and electricity questions. Billing was handled for the following numbers of accounts:

Water	283,347
Sewer	280,624
Stormwater	200,349
Power	18,793

# **Civil Service Commission 2023 Annual Report**



## MISSION

The Civil Service Commission is committed to providing a quality workforce for the City of Columbus based upon merit system principles. Through our collective knowledge and experience, we strive for efficiency and consistency in the application of the Commission's Rules and Policies. We are dedicated to improving the services we provide by anticipating employment trends, by listening to the needs of the operating agencies, and by responding accordingly.

## INTRODUCTION

The Civil Service Commission is the primary contact point for candidates seeking employment with the City of Columbus. The Commission acts as the gateway, assessing applicant qualifications for 91 percent of all City jobs. Through the online Employment Center and applicant testing, the Commission ensures the individuals who ultimately comprise the City's workforce of approximately 8,400 full-time employees, are of the highest caliber capable of providing exceptional service to the citizens of Columbus.

Together with its Commissioners, the Civil Service Commission is responsible for upholding and administering all mandated provisions of the Columbus City Charter, including, but not limited to, the administration of the City's class plan, verifying personnel actions and certifying City payroll, and serving as a neutral hearing body for employee appeals regarding suspension or discharge actions by an appointing authority. As required by the Ohio Revised Code, the Commission also provides class plan maintenance, personnel action oversight, and appeal hearing services for all classified employees of the Columbus City Schools.

## CLASS PLAN MAINTENANCE

The Civil Service Commission is responsible for maintaining the City's class plan, which provides a structural framework for all personnel actions and provides the basis for an equitable compensation plan. Regular class plan reviews and revisions are necessary to ensure each class specification continues to meet the ever-changing needs of each department. For this reason, an important Commission objective is to review every classification at least once every five years. At the close of 2023, 100 percent of the City's class plan was up-to-date. As part of this objective, staff completed a total of 167 class reviews with recommendations approved by the Commission in 2023.

The 167 reviews resulted in:

- 12 actions to create new classification specifications
- 7 actions to abolish classifications
- 18 actions to review without change
- 127 actions to revise and/or retitle

- 3 actions to lift or impose moratorium

Additionally, 86 positions were randomly reviewed to determine if their duties matched their current classification; of these, 86 positions (100%) of these positions were properly classified.

The Commission also conducts job audits upon request by an individual, a department, or a union. The purpose of these audits is to ensure that City employees are performing the duties for which they were hired, qualified, and being properly compensated. During 2023, Commission staff completed a total of five position audits; one of these positions were identified as misclassified. Misclassifications are typically resolved through reassignment of duties to the position which are appropriate for the current class, or reallocation of the position to a different class for which the current duties best fit.

#### APPLICANT AND EMPLOYEE SERVICES

In order to ensure that specific positions under each of the job classes in the class plan can be filled in a timely fashion with qualified employees, the City's Charter has designated primarily two classification types: noncompetitive and competitive. Noncompetitive classes are either non-skilled positions or those with qualifications that have a license or other conditions that must be met by an external source, such as a Registered Nurse, and for which it is impracticable to test. Competitive classes are those which require a broader set of minimum qualifications and a variety of job-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities, such as an Office Assistant and for which testing is practical.

To identify an initial pool of candidates for City employment, the Commission uses its online Employment Center database. The Center includes a wealth of information about jobs with the City, including: current vacancies, exam opportunities, job descriptions, qualification requirements, and salary information. Additionally, the Center houses an automated job interest database and the convenience of submitting applications online. This service can be utilized via the Commission's website from any computer with web access or at kiosks located on the first floor at the Commission's downtown offices at 77 N. Front Street. A potential applicant can indicate interest in multiple jobs and will automatically receive an email notice to apply when the City is taking applications for a given job.

The Applicant and Employee Services Unit is responsible for the notification and application process for the City's noncompetitive, provisional, and unclassified jobs.

In 2023, the Applicant and Employee Services Unit:

- received 11,167 Job Interest Cards submitted electronically for all City jobs
- posted 886 noncompetitive/provisional/unclassified job vacancies
- received 27,384 online applications for noncompetitive/provisional/unclassified job postings

#### NON-UNIFORMED TESTING

The Commission's Non-Uniformed Testing Unit administers exams to further determine candidates' suitability for the work which will be performed in all tested (competitive and qualifying noncompetitive) job classes, other than the Police and Fire sworn jobs. Exams open for testing are advertised (posted) on the Commission's website. Individuals interested in taking the exam can submit an application and then be invited to the test if it's determined they meet the minimum qualifications (education/experience/licensure) for the exam. Those passing the test have their names put on an eligible list, in score order (or alphabetically for qualifying noncompetitive lists), for consideration for any upcoming department vacancies.

If, after an eligible list is established through open recruitment, a City department has special recruiting needs for a position, they may request a candidate be considered and tested for a job class under provisions of CSC Rule VI. If the candidate meets all requirements and passes the test, their name is added to the existing eligible list in accordance with the established scoring structure and effective dates for the list.

In 2023, the Non-Uniformed Testing Unit:

- received and processed 162 exam recruitment requests (34% increase over 2022)
- received and processed 44 Rule VI requests
- reviewed 12,966 exam applications
- tested 3601 candidates
- received requests for and administered 56 Columbus City Schools (CCS) examinations

The Commission is committed to having a current exam in place and ready to be administered for each of the 220 non-uniformed competitive and qualifying noncompetitive classifications in the City and to establishing an eligible list within 60 days from the date a test is requested by a department. With the unprecedented number of recruitments, this goal was still achieved for many of them. The exams are directly based on the work performed by current employees in the job class and are comprised of varying combinations of components, called subtests. Some of the most common subtests include: computer skills, information ordering, logic and reasoning, mathematics, memorization, name/number comparison, oral communication, oral comprehension, problem sensitivity, reading maps/plans, written communication, reading comprehension, written expression, and situational judgement tests.

A full job analysis to review, revise, and/or develop an exam was completed for 22 non-uniformed competitive and qualifying noncompetitive classifications. These reviews and revisions included consideration of methods to reduce adverse impact on minority candidates. The non-uniformed testing team also offered weekend testing, open testing, and self-scheduling for several exams, providing more options to candidates.

Commission Rules also allow latitude for City departments to hire personnel provisionally when there is a critical need to immediately fill a position but there is no eligible list in place. In order to ensure fair access to City jobs, the Commission is committed to maintaining a provisional employee count below two percent of the total number of full-time classified City employees. The City began and ended 2023 with no provisional employees.

**UNIFORMED TESTING**

The Civil Service Commission’s Uniformed Testing Unit administers exams for nine job classes that make up the Public Safety services for the City of Columbus. Exams are administered for both entry-level and promotional job classes. The majority of the examinations are comprised of at least three components, including a paper test, an oral response, and a physical assessment or tactical exercise exams. The Uniformed Testing Unit works to ensure fairness and consistency in the testing processes of all uniformed exams. The Police Officer and Firefighter job classes compose the entry-level exams. In addition to testing, certified lateral applications for Police Officer were also accepted. There are multiple promotional ranks that are tested. Tested ranks for Fire include: Fire Lieutenant, Fire Captain, Fire Battalion Chief, and Fire Deputy Chief. Tested ranks for Police include: Police Sergeant, Police Lieutenant, and Police Commander. For promotional exams, Fire Battalion Chief and Fire Deputy Chief were tested in 2022 with resulting eligible lists established in 2023. Fire Lieutenant, Fire Captain and Police Sergeant were administered in 2023 and the resulting eligible lists established in 2023. Each of these exams were developed, administered, and validated by Civil Service Commission staff.

**Entry-Level Testing**

For Police Officer, the number of applications received, candidates tested, and candidates who were added to the eligible list to fill academy classes for the year 2023 were as follows: 1595 applications, 895 tested, 463 added to the eligible list. These numbers include 71 who applied and 23 who were added to the eligible list through the certified lateral process.

In the fourth quarter of 2023 the Commission also began administering the Firefighter exam. In all, 2694 applications were received and 480 candidates took the written and oral phases in 2023. Testing will continue in 2024, resulting in an eligible list to be established in 2024.

**Promotional Testing**

Number of Exam Phases	Number of Applicants	Number of Candidates Tested (At Least Phase 1)	Number of Candidates Added to Eligible List	
Fire Battalion Chief	3	15	14	9
Fire Deputy Chief	3	7	4	3
Fire Lieutenant	3	194	134	65
Fire Captain	3	68	47	27
Police Sergeant	4	171	114	80

**PAYROLL AND PERSONNEL ACTIONS**

Another City Charter responsibility conferred upon the Commission is the monitoring and certification of the entire bi-weekly City payroll. This means that no City employee can be paid until the Commission certifies that the individual was hired and continues to be employed in accordance with the City Charter, Civil Service Commission Rules, and current collective bargaining agreements/pay ordinances. The monitoring process includes verifying personnel transactions such as appointments, changes in pay, leaves of absences, and political activity.

**COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS**

In addition to services provided to the City of Columbus and its employees, the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) provides that the Commission also oversees various administrative personnel functions for approximately 3,742 employees in the classified service of the Columbus Board of Education (Board). In accordance with the ORC and an agreement executed by both the Commission and the Board, services provided by Commission staff for the various administrative personnel functions are billed to the Board. The Commission will make such services available to the Board as long as Board funding is available for reimbursement of Commission costs for the services.

As of January 1, 2023 there were 134 classification specifications in the Columbus City Schools’ class plan. During the year, staff completed a total of 25 class plan modifications, of which 9 were requests received directly from Columbus City.

The 6 reviews resulted in:

- 0 actions to create new classification specifications
- 1 actions to abolish classifications
- 10 actions to review without change
- 0 action to place a moratorium
- 14 actions to merge, revise and/or retitle

These actions resulted in the district’s class plan totaling 133 classifications as of December 31, 2023.

Additionally, Civil Service Commission received 3 position audit requests from Columbus City Schools in 2023. All of which were converted to a classification review.

In 2023, Columbus City Schools utilized the Commission’s downtown test center for 12 days of testing, and the Hearing Room for three days for trial board hearings.

#### CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS

The City Charter provides that the Mayor, with the approval of City Council, appoint the three Civil Service Commissioners:

Commissioner	Date Appointed	Term Expiration
Larry Price	September 20, 2020	January 31, 2026
Mark Hatch	January 1, 2021	January 31, 2028
Dawn Tyler Lee	April 25, 2022	January 31, 2024

The Commissioners have the responsibility to establish the Rules that govern the selection, classification, promotion, and termination of the classified employees of the City of Columbus and the Columbus City Schools. During 2023, the Commissioners ruled on applicant appeals, heard employee disciplinary appeals, amended Commission Rules and Regulations, and responded to personnel requests from department directors, elected City Officials, and the School Board.

Throughout 2023, the Commission:

- held 12 regular meetings
- held 1 special meeting
- held 3 trial board disciplinary appeal hearings
- held 0 full commission hearing

The Commission’s 2023 docket included:

- 0 disciplinary appeals filed by employees/unions
- 0 disciplinary appeal rulings
- 13 non-disciplinary appeal rulings
- 13 non-disciplinary appeals filed by employees/unions
- 0 appeals withdrawn
- 0 full commission disciplinary appeal rulings
- 58 requests for background administrative reviews by applicants
- 58 background administrative review rulings

#### EXPENDITURES

Summary - Expenditures by Unit	2022	2023
Administration	\$2,782,761	\$3,224,112
Classification & Testing-Sworn Employees	1,220,009	\$1,432,415
Classification & Testing-Civilian Employees	559,582	\$662,687
Total Expenditures	\$4,562,352	\$5,319,214

# **Office of Education 2023 Annual Report**

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Office of Education shall have as its primary duty the recommendation, development, and implementation of ideas and programs to enhance the ability of the city to provide quality life-long learning opportunities for the residents of Columbus.

## 2024 PLANNED ACTIVITIES

The following initiatives will be completed by the City of Columbus Mayor's Office of Education over the year 2024. These initiatives are categorized by Columbus Covenant Goals.

### 1. Neighborhoods

**Prenatal to Five:** In 2023, the Office of Education worked with Future Ready Five, the Franklin County Early Childhood Advisory Council, and other community partners on the continued implementation of a prenatal to five strategic plan that will benefit every neighborhood in Franklin County. This year, the Office will continue this work as Future Ready Five continues to implement their plan, Future Ready by Five (FR5), to the community; making sure that every child, in every neighborhood is ready for kindergarten.

**Prekindergarten in Every Neighborhood:** In 2024, as in previous years, the Office will use data collected from various sources to strategically expand pre-kindergarten throughout Columbus, focusing first on communities with the highest needs and the lowest capacity. Using this data, the Office will work to assure that every neighborhood in Columbus has access to early learning opportunities and that the opportunities available are of the highest quality.

**Linden Park Neighborhood Early Childhood Education Center:** The Linden Park Neighborhood Early Childhood Education Center is a unique collaboration between Columbus City Schools and the Office of Education. In 2016, The Office helped develop and open Linden Park. This year, the Office will again provide funding for approximately 200 Linden Pre-K students at the center in both Columbus City Schools' classrooms and classrooms operated by community-based providers.

**Hilltop Early Learning Center:** Since 2018, the Office of Education has been working with City partners on the development of a new, state-of-the-art early learning center in the Hilltop. Excitingly, the facility opened at the beginning of the 2023-204 school year. In 2024, the Office will continue to work with Columbus Early Learning Centers to increase enrollment, and to increase opportunities for Hilltop children.

**After School Programs:** Columbus youth are still struggling with mental and behavioral health needs, exasperated by the COVID 19 pandemic. In 2024, after-school providers will focus intensely on the specific needs of children, including mental health, academic success, and social-emotional development. As in previous years, services funded by the Office's After School Grant Program in 2024 will focus on assisting

specific ethnic and minority youth, such as Asians, Somalis, Ethiopians, and the LGBTQ+ population. In addition, many programs serve children specifically from disadvantaged communities such as Linden, Milo Grogan, Near East, Franklinton, and the Hilltop. In addition, in 2024, the Office is working with Columbus City Schools, YMCA of Central Ohio, and Boys and Girls Club of Central Ohio on an after school program for middle school students.

**Safety City:** In 2023, the Office worked with Nationwide Children’s Hospital, the Columbus departments of Public Safety, Neighborhoods, and Health; and other partners on the implementation of the safety city initiative as a part of the Columbus City Schools Summer Experience. In 2024 City partners will again use specific child mortality, demographic, and census tract data to focus safety efforts on the issues most harming Columbus children.

## 2. Safety

**Social-Emotional Learning in Prekindergarten:** Research shows that children who have attended high-quality pre-kindergarten education programs are more likely to be able to read at grade level and graduate from high school and less likely to commit crimes, be arrested, or be incarcerated. [1] Long-term benefits of high-quality early learning include lower rates of poverty, unemployment, drug use, and teenage pregnancy. [2] The Office of Education’s 2024 pre-kindergarten strategy includes requirements for programs to make sure these children are learning these important social and emotional skills.

**Prenatal to Five:** As noted above, the Office is working with Future Ready Five in 2024 to implement the Future Ready by Five (FR5) plan for Franklin County. Included in this plan are strategies, drivers, and outputs that address child and family wellness. Addressing the mental, behavioral, and physical needs of children and families have long terms effects on our community.

**After School Programs:** After school programs play a critical role in keeping Columbus students safe is by providing a safe environment for children to learn after the school day ends. According to the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) and its national database of evaluations, research confirms that “children and youth who participate in after-school programs can reap a host of positive benefits in several interrelated outcome areas—academic, social-emotional, prevention and health and wellness. These are the skills that many suggest are necessary for youth to succeed in the 21st Century global economy and world.” In 2024, the Office of Education will again provide the opportunity for 2,200 Columbus youth to participate in this important program.

In addition, in 2024, the Office is working with Columbus City Schools, the Boys and Girls Club of Central Ohio, YMCA of Central Ohio, United Way of Central Ohio, and many other after school providers on an after school program for middle school students.

**Safety City:** As noted above, in 2023, the Office of Education worked with Nationwide Children’s Hospital and other partners on the implementation of the safety city initiative as a part of the Columbus City Schools Summer Experience. The goal of this initiative was to reduce the death and injury of Columbus children through education and family engagement. Monitoring child mortality data allowed us to measure our success and implement programs where needed. In 2024, this work will again be included as an important part of the Columbus City Schools Summer Experience program.

## 3. Education

**Prenatal to Five:** Mayor Ginther’s vision for America’s Opportunity City is that every child in Columbus enters kindergarten ready to learn. Becoming kindergarten-ready is about so much more than participating in a quality early learning program. While early education is important, other developmental milestones must be reached and adverse life conditions overcome. This year, the Office of Education will continue to work with Future Ready Five and all community partners on the implementation of Future Ready by Five (FR5), the prenatal to five strategic plan for Franklin County.

**Prekindergarten:** According to recent data from the Ohio Department of Children and Youth, only 35 percent of children statewide tested as ready for kindergarten. And only 20 percent of Black children tested as ready. Now, more than ever, children need to be enrolled in robust, high-quality early learning programs and the Office of Education will continue to serve Columbus children through Early Start Columbus (ESC), the City’s pre-kindergarten expansion program. In 2024, the Office again plans to serve 1,000 children in ESC.

**Columbus City Schools:** the Mayor’s Education Director serves as the main liaison between the City and the Columbus City School District for important issues.

**Student Assessments:** As a requirement of Early Start Columbus, all Early Start Columbus students are administered Ready4Success (R4S) pre- and post-tests in early literacy and math. Each year, the Office of Education matches our R4S data with Columbus City Schools Kindergarten Readiness (KRA) tests scores. Excitingly, we know that our program works. Our latest assessment showed that 46 percent of ESC students tested in the highest KRA band while only 18 percent tested in the lowest KRA band. While the data was very positive, in 2024, we will analyze how a new mid-year assessment helped to identify children experiencing delays and worked to improve their scores.

Prekindergarten in the Hilltop: As previously noted, in 2024, the Office will continue to work with Columbus Early Learning Centers to increase both enrollment and opportunities for Hilltop children at the new Hilltop Early Learning Center. This new facility will provide a high-quality prekindergarten education to up to 240 Hilltop children and the important wraparound services crucial for success.

Linden Park Neighborhood Early Childhood Education Center: As previously noted, the Linden Park Neighborhood Early Childhood Education Center is a unique collaboration between Columbus City Schools and the Office of Education. In 2016, the Office helped develop and open Linden Park. This year, the Office will again provide funding for approximately 200 Linden Pre-K students at the center in both Columbus City Schools' classrooms and classrooms operated by community-based providers.

Social-Emotional Learning: Like in previous years, in 2024, the Office will serve approximately 2,200 Columbus children in after-school programs throughout Columbus. Since 2017, Partnership4Success (P4S), providers developed and implemented improvement plans that supported social-emotional learning and provided better outcomes for youth. These skills, such as the ability to self-regulate, would have been crucial for children isolated and without social activity during the pandemic.

Read It Again (RIA): RIA is an evidence-based low-cost instructional supplement designed to promote intentional teaching practices in early childhood education programs serving children from birth to age five. In 2023, the Office partnered with the Crane Center at Ohio State to work with ESC teachers to implement RIA in all classrooms. In 2024, the Office will continue this program with the Crane Center and work to expand RIA to all providers in Franklin County.

Summer Programming: During the summer of 2023, the Office of Education provided over \$500,000 to early learning providers to continue the Early Start Columbus program throughout the summer. In addition, the Office partnered with Columbus Early Learning Centers, the Crane Center at Ohio State and the Family, Adolescent, and Child Community Engagement Service (FACCES) at Start Point Learning Center to expand family-based, kindergarten readiness programs throughout the community. The Office plans to continue this work in summer 2024.

Columbus Promise: Since 2021, the Office has been working with City Council President Hardin's Office, I Know I Can, Columbus City Schools, and Columbus State Community College on the implementation and expansion of President Hardin's Columbus Promise Program. In 2024, the Office will continue to work on this initiative to provide free tuition to Columbus State for every Columbus City Schools student.

Additional Programs: The office of Education is also working on important initiatives with certain partners to reduce absenteeism in Columbus City Schools, increase the number of children in Franklin County that are reading-proficient by third-grade, and increase the college and career readiness of current and former Columbus City Schools students.

#### 4. Economic Development

ROI of Prekindergarten: The academic and personal benefits of high-quality pre-kindergarten education for children have been well demonstrated. Children who participate in early childhood experiences are better prepared for school, need fewer interventions, pass the third-grade reading test in higher percentages, and are more likely to graduate from high school. Economic policymakers are now looking at pre-kindergarten as an important economic development tool. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, "mounting evidence shows that investments in early education may be considered as an economic development strategy" and that "early education investments yield a return that far exceeds the return on most public projects that are considered economic development." This return on investment in the form of lower societal costs, such as incarceration, rehabilitation, and welfare can be as high as \$8 for every \$1 invested in early childhood education. This potentially means that the return on our investment is nearly \$72,000,000.00.

Local Support: Through the 2024 Early Start Columbus program, the Office plans to provide almost \$9 million in financial support to approximately 40 Columbus non-profits and businesses, almost all of which are minority or female-owned enterprises.

#### 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The following list outlines the major initiatives that were successfully completed in the past year. The initiatives are categorized by Columbus Covenant Goals.

##### 1. Neighborhoods

Prenatal to Five: In 2023, the Office of Education worked with Future Ready Five, the Franklin County Early Childhood Advisory Council, and other community partners on the continued implementation of a prenatal to five strategic plan that will benefit every neighborhood in Franklin County.

Prekindergarten in Every Neighborhood: As in previous years, in 2023 the Office provided funding to neighborhood-based prekindergarten providers to strategically expand prekindergarten throughout Columbus, serving over 1,000 Columbus children.

Linden Park Neighborhood Early Childhood Education Center: As noted previously, through a collaboration with Columbus City Schools, the Office of Education helped to develop and open the Linden Park Neighborhood Early Childhood Education Center in Linden in 2016. In 2023,



the Office provided funding for 200 Linden pre-kindergarten students at the center in both Columbus City Schools' classrooms and classrooms operated by community-based providers.

**After-School Programs:** Services funded by the Office of Education's 2023 After School Grant Program focused on assisting specific ethnicities and minorities such as Asian, Somali, Ethiopian, and LGBTQ youth. In addition, many programs served children specifically from disadvantaged communities such as Linden, Milo Grogan, Near East, Franklinton, and the Hilltop. In addition, in 2023, the Office began working with Columbus City Schools, YMCA of Central Ohio and Boys and Girls Club of Central Ohio on an after school program for middle school students.

**Safety City:** In 2023, the Office worked with Nationwide Children's Hospital, the Columbus departments of Public Safety, Neighborhoods, and Health; and other partners on the continued implementation of the safety city initiative in Linden and the Greater Hilltop Neighborhood.

## 2. Safety

**Social-Emotional Learning in Prekindergarten:** As previously noted, long-term benefits of a high-quality pre-kindergarten education include lower rates of poverty, unemployment, drug use, and teenage pregnancy. The Office's prekindergarten expansion program, Early Start Columbus, includes requirements for programs to make sure that the children learned important social and emotional skills. These skills, such as the ability to self-regulate, would have been crucial for children isolated and without social activity during the pandemic.

**Prenatal to Five:** As noted above, in 2023, the Office worked with Future Ready Five on the Future Ready by Five plan for Franklin County. Included in this plan are strategies, drivers, and outputs that address child and family wellness. Addressing the mental, behavioral, and physical needs of children and families have long terms effects on our community.

**After-School Programs:** As noted above, an important strategy in keeping Columbus students safe is by providing a safe environment for children to learn after the school day ends. Services funded by the Office of Education's 2023 After School Grant Program included: youth development, academic success, healthy lifestyles, tutoring, empowerment, civic success, leadership, nutrition, interpersonal skills, and many others. In addition, in 2023, the Office began working with Columbus City Schools, the YMCA of Central Ohio and Boys and Girls Club of Central Ohio on an after school program for middle school students.

**Safety City:** As noted above, in 2023, the Office of Education worked with Nationwide Children's Hospital and other partners on the development and implementation of a safety city pilot project. The goal of this initiative was to reduce the death and injury of Columbus children through education and family engagement.

## 3. Education

**Prenatal to Five:** As noted above, in 2023, the Office of Education worked with Future Ready Five, the Franklin County Early Childhood Advisory Council, and other community partners on the development and introduction of a prenatal to five strategic plan for Franklin County. When fully implemented, this plan will fulfill the Mayor's vision that all Franklin County children enter Kindergarten ready to learn.

**Prekindergarten:** 2023 continued to be a challenging time for the early learning community. Children, as well as providers, teachers, and families, were impacted by teacher shortages, disruptions of service, virtual learning, and a lack of important programs and services. The Office of Education's goal for 2023 was to provide 1,000 Columbus children with a high-quality early education through the Early Start Columbus program. Through the innovative work of our Early Start providers, we were able to reach that goal.

**Columbus Board of Education:** As a non-voting member of the Columbus Board of Education, the City's Education Director serves as the main liaison between the City and District for important issues.

**Student Assessments:** As a requirement of Early Start Columbus, all Early Start Columbus students are administered Ready4Success (R4S) pre- and post-tests in early literacy and math. Beginning in 2021, we have been able to match our R4S data with Columbus City Schools Kindergarten Readiness (KRA) tests scores. Excitedly, we learned that our program is working – 44 percent of ESC students tested in the highest KRA band and 41 percent tested in the middle KRA band. And importantly, only 15 percent tested in the lowest KRA band. We are working to identify that data for 2023.

**Linden Park Neighborhood Early Childhood Education Center:** As previously noted, the Linden Park Neighborhood Early Childhood Education Center is a unique collaboration between Columbus City Schools and the Office of Education. In 2016, The Office helped develop and open Linden Park. In 2023, the Office provided funding for approximately 200 Linden Pre-K students at the center in both Columbus City Schools' classrooms and classrooms operated by community-based providers.

**Social-Emotional Learning:** The Office serves approximately 2,200 Columbus children in after-school programs throughout Columbus. Since 2017, Partnership4Success (P4S), providers developed and implemented improvement plans that supported social-emotional learning and

provided better outcomes for youth. These skills, such as the ability to self-regulate, would have been crucial for children isolated and without social activity during the pandemic.

**Read It Again (RIA):** RIA is an evidence-based low-cost instructional supplement designed to promote intentional teaching practices in early childhood education programs serving children from birth to age five. In 2023, the Office partnered with the Crane Center at Ohio State to work with ESC teachers to implement RIA in all classrooms.

**Summer Programming:** During the summer of 2023, the Office of Education provided over \$500,000 to early learning providers to continue the Early Start Columbus program throughout the summer. In addition, the Office partnered with Columbus Early Learning Centers, the Crane Center at Ohio State and the Family, Adolescent, and Child Community Engagement Service (FACCES) at Start Point Learning Center to expand family-based, kindergarten readiness programs throughout the community.

**Columbus Promise:** In 2023, the Office worked with City Council President Hardin’s Office, I Know I Can, Columbus City Schools, and Columbus State Community College on the implementation and expansion of President Hardin’s Columbus Promise Program.

**Additional Programs:** In 2023, the Office of Education worked on important initiatives with certain partners to reduce absenteeism in Columbus City Schools, increase the number of children in Franklin County that are reading-proficient by third-grade, and increase the college and career readiness of current and former Columbus City Schools students.

#### 4. Economic Development

**ROI of Pre-K:** As previously noted, the return on investment of a high-quality pre-kindergarten education can be as high as \$8 for every \$1 invested. Using this math, Early Start Columbus may have provided up to \$72,000,000.00 in returns to our community, our city, and our state.

**Local Support:** Through Early Start Columbus, the Office has provided \$9,000,000.00 in financial support to 40 non-profits and Columbus businesses, almost all of which are minority or female-owned enterprises.

**Columbus Wage Theft Prevention and  
Enforcement Commission  
2023 Annual Report**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Mission of the Columbus Wage Theft Prevention and Enforcement Commission is to prevent workers from losing take-home pay through wage theft and payroll fraud. Wage theft is endemic throughout the state of Ohio, and many in the community have been taken advantage of by employers that seek to cut corners to add a little more profit to their bottom line instead of following the law and supporting working families.

## **INTERAGENCY OUTREACH**

Standing up a new city commission from scratch is always a challenge, and it can be helpful to have examples of effective agencies to follow. A diverse sample of agencies at various sizes, geographic locations, and levels of government provides a wealth of examples and allows us to mix and match to build an agency and a program that fits our community.

In 2023, the Columbus Wage Theft Prevention and Enforcement Commission engaged frequently with other agencies to learn from their experience and develop best practices. Of the more than 25 such engagements, more than half were with other local governments. Our participation in 10+ meetings and events with federal agencies though bore the most significant fruit.

The Commission made history in 2023 by signing an MOU with the US Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division. The memorandum gives Columbus enhanced access to federal enforcement data, sets up cross-training between staff, provides for mutual and direct referrals of cases between the agencies, and allows for joint enforcement action and investigations. This agreement is the first of its kind between a city and the Department of Labor.

## **COMMISSION OPERATIONS**

At the start of 2023, the Commission had been fully staffed for just over a year, and had not yet seen a full compliment of commissioners appointed. As such a young agency we are still setting up and making adjustments to internal processes. We adopted our first set of Rules and Regulations, as required under section 377.11, at our first meeting of the year.

Council's adoption of Ordinance 1016-2023, Freelance Worker Protections, gave the Commission additional duties to enforce protections for freelance workers under Ch. 2337. The Rules and Regulations, as well as some internal forms, were updated late in the year to reflect those changes and additional duties.

With the help of Barry Pickett, the Mayor's Director of Labor Relations, we were able fill all the seats on the Commission. Two new members, Jorge Barrios and Chris Naegele, were interviewed, appointed and sworn in. When the City later implemented a standardized oath of office and pledge of ethical conduct for boards and commissions citywide, those commissioners were sworn in again alongside the three sitting commissioners.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Most labor law enforcement, including our endeavor described in Ch. 377, is complaint driven. It relies on workers knowing their rights and how to fight to secure them. Most workers however, especially those most vulnerable to wage theft, do not. In order for the Commission to execute its mandate we must engage in campaigns to inform residents of their rights under federal, state, and local law. Last year we participated in three such events aimed at workers and labor.

Similarly, any new regulatory effort requires conversation with the business community to educate them on their responsibilities. In 2023 the Commission participated in an ODI event reaching out to women and minority owned businesses. This event was chosen because efforts to ensure workers are paid properly need not undermine the City's efforts at supplier diversity. We also engaged with other City departments on various occasions to educate and confirm compliance.

## **COMPLAINTS and INVESTIGATIONS**

In 2023 the Commission received 14 complaints, more than triple what we received the year prior. Of those complaints only one remains open. Commission staff opened an additional 10 investigations for potential violations of rules and regulations, three of which remain open at time of writing.

Of the complaints received in 2023, just two were reported under Ch. 2337 (Freelance Worker Protections). One case was closed due to the lack of response from the complaining party to a request for more information. The other case was concluded successfully.

- Number of Complaints: 2
- Monetary Value: \$6,650
- Number of Settlements: 1
- Average Term: Immediate Payment

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

At this time, we do not recommend the reduction or revocation of any financial incentive agreements as defined in Columbus City Codes Chapter 377.