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Seth Walsh
Councilmember

Budget Priorities for FY25 Recommended Budget

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As we look ahead, budget deficits lie on the horizon. The reason is simple: we have not grown enough to keep up with the demand for quality service delivery in the City of Cincinnati. Cities that are not growing are dying. We must think boldly now to see a vibrant and thriving city that everyone can be proud of well into the future.

In my FY2025 Budget Priorities, I seek to outline the tenets of a budget that ceases to do business as usual and moves Cincinnati toward an aggressive, all in, growth mentality. Now is the time to invest in ourselves and to create pathways for new revenue and growth in our City. Our future depends on it.

My focus areas are on neighborhood economic development, fostering a healthy and thriving small business ecosystem, downtown vitality, public safety, and service delivery.

Public Safety and Health

Public Safety: For our neighborhoods to reach their potential, they must be safe and clean. It is key to continue investing in CPD and CFD to make sure they have the resources they need to keep our communities safe.

1. Increase authorized strength of the Cincinnati Fire Department by at least 50 for FY25 and develop a plan to raise it further to reflect current staffing needs and significantly lower the overtime required.
2. Create and implement a plan for how to increase staffing levels in the Cincinnati Fire Department to match the increased authorized strength starting in this budget.
3. Funding for necessary equipment and fleet replacement for CPD and CFD vehicles beyond their lifecycles with long lead times, including replacing any police vehicle with over 200,000 miles of use.
4. Invest in increased health screenings and mental health services for CPD and CFD.
5. Fees for usage of city recreational facilities by Saturday Hoops waived.

Thriving Neighborhoods

Neighborhood Economic Development: Robust growth and development are only possible if all 52 of our neighborhoods are set up to thrive. All neighborhoods should have a clear pathway to growth and development in their community, but right now there are many who do not.

1. Uncap and increase funding for the CDC Quick Strike Acquisition Fund.

2. Increase the Department of Community and Economic Development's capital budget to \$10,000,000 across all programs, with a particular focus on NOFA and NBDIP, to support development in the City.
3. Invest in a comprehensive study to create a roadmap for critical investment opportunities, the needed capital, and a strategy to make sure that we are positioned as strongly as possible in comparison to our peer cities to be aggressive in driving growth and development.
4. CDC Operation Support funded at at least the same level as last year through Homebase via CDBG.
5. Fund repairs and cleanup of street stairs on Polk St in Clifton Heights and Steiner Ave in Sedamsville.

Downtown Vitality: A thriving downtown is also critical to the growth of Cincinnati. We must continue to market downtown as a destination for events of all sizes, attract more large-scale events like Taylor Swift, and retain events we already have like Black Tech Week and the Cincinnati Music Festival. Particularly with the Convention Center going offline for renovations in the next few years, it will be crucial to get creative to keep our downtown vibrant.

1. \$1,000,000 for the Forbes 30 under 30 event in 2024.
2. Funding to establish an ongoing partnership with the Cincinnati Regional Chamber to create an Event Accelerator Fund with the mission of retaining and developing more medium and large-scale public events throughout the city and to enhance cultural vibrance and strengthen our community while increasing revenue for the city. Funding should support training and planning for local creators to help them launch new and evolving cultural events.
3. Funding for a study in collaboration with Film Cincinnati to explore how we can capture the dramatic increase in movie productions if the Ohio Motion Picture Tax Credit Program gets increased or uncapped. This should include planning for the creation of a production district including a soundstage and other necessary film infrastructure, as well as new business districts and housing surrounding it.
4. \$250,000 to launch the operations of a new sports and events commission to help attract and retain major sporting events in the City of Cincinnati.
5. Funding for Cincinnati Parks specifically to explore expanding and enhancing Piatt Park and for necessary enhancements and repairs to the Sinton East Operations Center.

Growing Economic Opportunities

Thriving Small Business Ecosystem: We have done a good job of helping launch businesses, but we also must help them expand and grow in our City. We should work to find more ways to support existing small businesses, particularly minority-owned small businesses, and small businesses in our disinvested neighborhoods.

1. Increase funding for small business support grants.
2. Uncap or significantly raise the cap for small business support programs.
3. Create and fund a pilot program to help existing small businesses, particularly minority-owned businesses, and those in historically disinvested neighborhoods, expand and stabilize their operations sustainably after the startup phase and help fill vacant storefronts throughout the City.
4. Funding to increase capacity for MBE and WBE participation in projects throughout the City and increased funding to scale up the Building Futures program in partnership with Urban League of

Southwest Ohio, Hamilton County Board of Commissioners, Ohio Department of Transportation, AFL-CIO, and the Cincinnati Building and Construction Trades Council.

Fiscal Sustainability

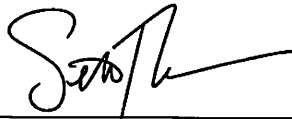
Fiscal Sustainability: To be set up for the future, our city must be fiscally responsible now while making strategic investments for the next decade. Innovative and results-oriented budgeting is a must to make sure that we have the flexibility to make bold investments to see our vision for the future become a reality.

1. Fund the pension at a 1.5% increase over FY24.
2. Full funding of ODPa to continue moving towards innovative and results-oriented budgeting.
3. No non-profit should be funded that did not participate in a competitive application process.

Excellent & Equitable Service Delivery

Excellent & Equitable Service Delivery: As we prioritize growth, we must not lose sight of making sure the City continues to provide excellent services to the people of Cincinnati. Maintaining and strengthening city services is important as we seek to encourage people to visit, invest in, and move to Cincinnati. Our workers are the backbone of the City and we have to make sure they are properly supported and invested in so that they can continue to provide excellent service to the people of Cincinnati and keep it a wonderful place to live.

1. Fund a study by a third-party vendor to evaluate the City's hiring process, benefits, salary structures, and anything else that impacts hiring and retention of employees across departments.
2. Investment in technology upgrades and personnel for the City's Law, Community Economic Development, Building and Inspections, and City Planning and Engagement Departments to ensure that their critical and time-sensitive work is properly supported, with particular focus on the following goals:
 - o NBDIP and NOFA projects contracted by December 31 of the year they are awarded.
 - o Contracts completed by the Law Department within 30 business days of being in our control to respond to them. This does not include time waiting for a response from the negotiating party.
 - o Leveraged support programs contracted by the end of July in the year they are awarded.
 - o Permit approval within 2.5 reviews by the Building and Inspections Department.



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