



## **2022 RECOMMENDED BUDGET MESSAGE FROM THE FRANKLIN COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

I am Kenneth Wilson, County Administrator, and I am pleased to present to the Board of Commissioners the 2022 Recommended Budget for Franklin County. Under the Commissioners' sound and prudent leadership, we present a budget that is fiscally responsible yet resident-centered, and prepares us to address our opportunities and challenges head-on over the course of the coming year.

This year's proposed budget is a reflection of the changes and challenges presented for the Central Ohio economy and residents by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. If nothing else, the pandemic has shown us the importance of sound forecasting and prudent planning. As a local government, we're facing new challenges such as the increase in inflation, slowed supply chain disruptions, a tight labor market, and increased employee healthcare costs, but we're still in a strong financial position because we've always been so responsible in our spending and planning when times weren't as tight as they are now.

The American Rescue Plan has delivered unprecedented federal relief to communities and individuals across the nation, including \$350 billion to support the public health response and economic recovery efforts by eligible state, local, territorial, and tribal governments. These recovery funds are allowed to cover costs that the County incurs from March 3, 2021 through December 31, 2024. These costs are required to fit into one of the following statutory categories

- To respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency or its negative economic impacts. This includes addressing urgent public health needs brought to light by the pandemic as well as supporting families, small businesses, non-profits, and hard-hit industries;
- To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay;
- To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.; and finally
- For the provision of government services, to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Franklin County will receive about \$256 million to be used over the coming few years. The first distribution of \$128 million was received in late May of this year, with the second distribution set to be received no earlier than May of 2022.

While we continue to address the short-term and urgent needs of our community, we will also invest in long-term strategies to emerge from this pandemic stronger and more resilient. Our community continues to grow and, in some ways, is already moving past the challenges of the pandemic. We know as county leaders, however, that our community will not be successful until every one of our residents is able to share in its success. That is our challenge as we work to rebuild and recover. Our goal is to help the community to return better than it ever was before, and our promise is to continue to serve every resident, every day.

As you will see throughout today's budget presentation, we will be focused on investing these resources where needed most to support a robust public health response, a strong and equitable economy, safe and reliable infrastructure, and efficient government services.

The County remains in a fiscally strong and sustainable position. The 2022 Recommended Budget includes a projected General Fund ending cash balance of 43% of the total 2022 Expenditures. This keeps the cash balance among the highest levels of other counties rated triple-A by Moody's and Standard & Poor's.

In recent years, the County has been able to maintain its General Fund cash balance with the help of federal support. Beginning with the CARES Act in 2020 and the support provided this year from the American Rescue Plan, the County has avoided the need to utilize approximately \$100 million in cash reserves and has not been required to tap into its rainy-day fund. This has allowed the Commissioners to preserve service levels in critical health and human services agencies, as well as to fund policy initiatives that align with our strategic priorities.

## **GENERAL FUND BUDGET**

General Fund revenue in the 2022 Recommended Budget is expected to be \$537 million. The largest proportion of General Fund revenue remains the Sales Tax, which comprises nearly 62% of the General Fund revenue. Sales tax collections have rebounded since the start of the pandemic; however, the actuals are likely higher than normal this year due to a shift in consumption from services to taxable goods, as well as support from the third round of Economic Impact Payments approved by the American Rescue Plan that was distributed in March 2021. As a result of these potential one-time effects, the 2022 Recommended Budget expects no growth from the \$334 million in collections projected for 2021.

Real Estate tax collections also were strong during 2021 due to the increased valuations from the recent triennial reappraisal. Along with state reimbursements, revenue in 2021 was 17% higher than the previous year. The estimates from the Budget Commission show an additional 2% growth in 2022 as a result of new construction, with total General Fund revenue of \$54 million from this source.

Intergovernmental revenue includes \$30 million from the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, as well as \$30 million for reimbursement from the State Public Defender's Office. The state biennial budget for fiscal years 2022 and 2023, House Bill 110, includes significant investment from the State of Ohio for the support of appointed counsel. Since July of this year, 100% of the costs for providing indigent defense are being reimbursed. The State Public Defender's Office is expecting the reimbursement rate for state fiscal year 2023 to be at least 95%. However, County agencies and the courts agreed that it would be prudent to budget for a 90% reimbursement rate based on historical fluctuations.

The 2022 Recommended Budget contains \$536 million in General Fund appropriations, which is \$0.5 million or 0.1% more than the 2021 projected expenditures. A majority of the General Fund budget is related to personnel costs, with \$213 million allocated for salaries and wages, and \$97 million for fringe benefits.

During the 2022 budget process that began this spring, the Franklin County Office of Management & Budget, or OMB, assessed the budget request of every agency, office, and court within the context of the County's mandatory requirements, statutory duties, and the demand for services. To account for inflationary increases and purchases that may have been delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, agencies were provided a 2.5% increase in non-personnel related categories. The estimated impact of this allowance was approximately \$5 million when compared to the 2021 budget that was approved last December.

In addition to the other budgeted expense categories, the 2022 Recommended Budget includes \$15 million in Contingency to meet unforeseen expenses during the year. This approaches the maximum 3% that is authorized by the Ohio Revised Code.

As shown in the chart, nearly 60% or \$320 million of the General Fund Budget is allocated to the provision of Justice & Public Safety. More than half of that amount, \$178 million, supports the operations of the Franklin County Sheriff's Office.

The next largest component of the General Fund Budget at \$99 million is for the operations of General Government & Economic Development, which includes support of the various elected officials, as well as the \$11.5 million in Grants through the County's Department of Economic Development & Planning.

## **2022 Recommended Budget Message**

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Reserves and Debt total \$90 million, including \$36 million for the payment of the County's annual debt service obligations, the \$15 million in Contingency, \$14 million in various operating subsidies, which includes including the \$4.8 million for the "mandated share" of programs administered by the Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services, \$5 million set aside for the Sanitary Engineer, and \$1.9 million for the Drainage Engineer in support of the County's stormwater efforts.

The 2022 Recommended Budget for Justice & Public Safety also includes \$95 million in the General Fund to support the operations of the courts and \$39 million for criminal and civil prosecution and legal defense services.

As a result of the increased state support for indigent defense, the Board of Commissioners, along with Common Pleas Court General Division, Domestic Relations Court/Juvenile Division, Probate Court, Municipal Court, and the Tenth District Court of Appeals worked to align the Schedule of Fees for Appointed Counsel Reimbursement with the State Maximum Fee Schedule revised by the Office of the Ohio Public Defender in September 2021. This will be the first increase in the hourly rate and maximum fees in over twenty years. The impact of these changes is estimated at \$7.6 million. The Office of Management & Budget will continue to work with the Courts to ensure there are sufficient appropriations available to cover this state mandate.

The 2022 Recommended Budget also includes approximately \$531,000 to support six assistant prosecuting attorneys. Five of these positions will assist in dealing with the record-high number of homicides in Columbus, the increase in domestic violence cases, and investigations into human trafficking. The remaining position will be in the civil division to deal with increased activity and the staffing of zoning hearings.

Along with the amounts noted in the chart, the Recommended Budget includes \$340,000 in support of the Municipal Court Specialty Dockets and \$250,000 for the Guardianship Services Board in 2022.

We are also working with the Common Pleas Court General Division on finalizing a recommendation for a program coordinator to establish a mental health docket to promote recovery and reduce recidivism in moderate to high-risk felony offenders whose crimes are substantially related to underlying mental health issues, as well as transitioning from house arrest electronic monitoring to Global Positioning System or GPS electronic monitoring. We hope to have these recommendations to you for inclusion before final approval of the budget in December.

## **ALL FUNDS BUDGET**

While a majority of the General Fund supports Justice & Public Safety, the largest portion of the all funds budget is dedicated to Social & Human Services. The total amount of budget appropriations recommended for all County funds in 2022 is just under \$2 billion, which represents a \$144 million or 8% increase from 2021 projected actuals.

As the largest category in the all funds budget, Social & Human Services represents 39% of the total 2022 Recommended Budget. These Social & Human Services are primarily supported by property tax levies approved by the voters. The County and its agencies continue to integrate and collaborate in approaching this work.

Franklin County delivers a variety of Social & Human Services in order to meet the needs of its residents, which are mostly supported by property tax levies, as well as state and federal funds. As seen in the chart, nearly one-third of these expenditures, or \$243 million, are for the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities. The Board serves over 20,000 individuals with developmental disabilities so they can live, work, learn, and participate in the community. This includes 7,000 served in the Residential Support Program, who receive Home and Community Based Services such as housing, transportation, and employment services that are leveraged with federal Medicaid funding.

Another \$205 million of these expenditures support the work of Franklin County Children Services. The agency is projecting to conduct 21,000 intake-related assessments this year. Franklin County Children Services continues to improve the percentage of youth initially placed with kin. Since 2017, the percentage of kinship placements has increased from 30% to 45%. Research shows that youth who need to be removed from their home due to safety concerns reunify more quickly and are less likely to re-enter agency custody when they are initially placed with relatives or non-relatives with whom they have a bond or special relationship.

The Recommended Budget includes \$169 million for the Alcohol, Drug, & Mental Health, or ADAMH, Board. With last year's successful passage of the 5-year, 2.85-mill levy, ADAMH will be able to maintain and enhance its System of Care. Mental health and addiction crisis system capacity must be addressed to meet growing unmet needs and demand for services. ADAMH is working with community partners to build the new Franklin County Mental Health and Addiction Crisis Center to serve as the central, preferred destination in Franklin County for behavioral health crisis needs. Now that the full project team is in place, ground-breaking for the Crisis Center is expected in the second quarter of 2022, with completion in 2024. When completed, the center will provide a complete crisis care continuum for adults that will offer a no-wrong-door philosophy to ensure that anyone who arrives at the facility receives or gets connected to services.

The Franklin County Office on Aging provides centralized access to programs and individualized services for older adults and their caregivers so they can preserve their independence and quality of life. These programs are supported by a levy that expires next year and is scheduled to be renewed on the November 2022 ballot. The proposed budget of \$48 million will support the nearly 10,000 seniors enrolled in the Senior Options program, which provides community-based services such as home delivered meals, homemaker services, adult day care, emergency response systems, and respite care. Included in this budget is approximately \$600,000 for the replacement of the current outdated case management system. The new system will allow for the Office on Aging to strengthen its business processes and expand its use of data analysis to continually improve upon operations.

## **SERVING, SUPPORTING, AND UPLIFTING ALL RESIDENTS**

In order to review the 2022 Recommended Budget in more detail, we will now highlight major 2021 achievements and planned 2022 initiatives of Franklin County agencies. Our first priority is to focus our efforts on serving, supporting, and uplifting all residents.

As Ohio's most populous County, one of every nine residents in the State of Ohio call Franklin County home. Since 2010, the County's population has grown by more than 158,000 individuals, or 12%, to over 1.3 million residents. There is little indication that this trend will slow over the next decade.

While Franklin County has seen population growth and increasing opportunities, not everyone in the community has benefited. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the poverty rate for all people in Franklin County was 13.5% before the pandemic. Even more distressing are the racial and other disparities—the poverty rate for African Americans is twice the County average, and almost one in five children in Franklin County are living in poverty.

As the leading provider of safety net services, Franklin County agencies serve the many residents who struggle to make ends meet every day. Disrupting poverty in Franklin County requires a response from the entire Central Ohio community to bring residents out of poverty to share in the progress. Our social service agencies will continue to be challenged to meet these needs.

The Rise Together Blueprint pointed out the role of racism as an underlying factor in poverty, and the Commissioners continue to take actions to re-envision the county's approach to racial equity as we continue on a journey to engrain racial equity in our county's DNA. Last year, we became the first county in the state to declare racism a public health emergency, and as such, racism is a root cause resulting in disparate outcomes in health, education, employment, housing, and criminal justice. This was

followed by the Commissioners establishing racial equity as a core principle with a pledge to commit to creating and sustaining an organizational culture that applies equity principles both internally and externally.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion worked with the Racial Equity Council comprising representatives from each county agency that falls under the Board of Commissioners appointing authority. During the year, the Council has developed an equity framework for Franklin County employees, and conducted a cultural climate audit with the assistance of the Raising The Bar Performance Group. Through this work, Franklin County has built capacity to create a DEI strategy and strategic actions for the path ahead.

The 2022 Recommended Budget also includes continued support utilizing resources from the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund to Franklin County Public Health to support the Associate Director of Equity and Inclusion to address health disparities and advance adoption of the Health and Equity in All Policies policy. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will also continue to work with the Purchasing Department to assist County agencies with increasing opportunities in contracting and access for funding to minority businesses.

Last year, the Commissioners voted to establish a first-of-its-kind Family Stabilization Unit to provide wraparound assistance, while taking a tailored approach to meet the unique needs of each family – all through a social determinant of health and racial equity lens.

Statistically, we know that such young men are likely to experience negative effects of their contact with the justice system throughout their lives. By using a holistic, multi-generational approach to assess the needs of an entire household, and connect it with available social services resources, the FSU team will be able to help address the root causes of some negative outcomes rather than simply responding to the symptoms.

The Unit collaborates with the courts, primarily through the Juvenile Court's Truancy Intervention and Prevention Program; and other governmental and social services agencies to create an integrated network of support for families. The Unit is projected to serve 220 families in the first year of the pilot program and expects to serve 250 families in 2022.

Work continues on standing up the Rise Together Innovation Center, a nonprofit entity established to tackle ideas to treat the causes of poverty, not just the symptoms. The Center will lead advocacy for and engage local, state, and federal policy makers to address practices and policies that impact poverty. The Center will collaborate with

agencies and organizations to support their work in driving and executing the recommendations of the Rise Together Blueprint.

Earlier this year, the Board of Trustees appointed Danielle Sydnor to become the inaugural leader of the Innovation Center. Over the next few months, Executive Director Sydnor and the Board of Trustees will be reaching out and listening to the community to help inform a strategic planning process for the Innovation Center. A chief component of that process will include working collectively with partners, including many of our agencies, to develop success metrics for the 13 Blueprint's goals and 120-plus action steps. This is among the most crucial roles for the Innovation Center – serving as a convener for community organizations to align and amplify efforts already underway to support the Blueprint, while identify gaps in the system that they can look to fill with big ideas and innovative new programming. We look forward to working together on driving solutions for countering poverty in Franklin County, and the 2022 Recommended Budget allocates \$2.5 million in the General Fund to support these efforts in the upcoming year.

The 2022 Recommended Budget includes funding for the continuation of Building Futures and Driving Futures, the Commissioners' premiere workforce training programs. The Columbus Urban League in partnership with the Columbus/Central Ohio Building and Construction Trades Council offers the Building & Driving Futures Pre-Apprenticeship training programs. Building Futures is a 12-week program that provides participants with general construction and trade-specific training. Driving Futures is a six-week program leading to driving certification. Participants in both programs have the opportunity to receive tutoring, mentoring, and other supportive services to remove barriers to successful program completion.

Participants also receive "soft skills" training, including interpersonal skills and financial literacy, and a weekly stipend while in the program. At the end of the cohort, participants complete an entrance assessment to progress directly into an apprenticeship program. They are also connected with other supportive services offered by Franklin County to help address barriers like transportation, housing, child care and more.

To date, the Commissioners have committed more than \$3 million in combined TANF and General Fund dollars to support this innovative partnership. By blending TANF and General Fund dollars to support the program, there is greater flexibility to connect participants with the supportive services, such as car repairs, child care, and stipends, to remain in the program and avoid some of the issues associated with the benefits cliff. During the last program period, 63 participants were enrolled in the Building Futures and Driving Futures programs, with 61 meeting the graduation requirements. 57 of the graduates were placed into apprenticeships or jobs, earning an average wage of \$23.55 per hour or \$49,000 per year.

A similar program is Roads2Work, which prepares participants to pass the state and national licensure exam for commercial driver licenses. IMPACT Community Action in partnership with Capital Transportation offers the Roads2Work training program for unemployed or underemployed Franklin County residents or restored citizens returning to the community from incarceration. Roads2Work is a 5-week training program consisting of one week of soft skills training, followed by four weeks of CDL-specific training. The program helps to place participants in unsubsidized employment opportunities offering livable wages.

These are just a few examples of programs that the Commissioners are committed to funding that align with the Rise Together Blueprint. In order to increase participation and opportunities for our residents during the upcoming year, the County has allocated almost \$2.4 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan to build upon these successful programs.

The 2022 Community Partnership grant application is available and completely open to all applicants. Nonprofit and governmental entities operating within the boundaries of Franklin County for a minimum of 3 years are eligible to apply for funding.

This year's grant application focuses on program/project areas to address inequities that have become even more apparent in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Applicants will need to demonstrate how the program or project aligns with one of the Board of Commissioners' Core Principles of Job Creation, Strategic Economic Development, & Fiscal Security; Supportive Health & Human Services; and Racial Equity.

All applicants must demonstrate how their project supports the work of, and connects to Rise Together: A Blueprint for Reducing Poverty in Franklin County. In addition, applicants must clearly demonstrate how County resources will be used to leverage other resources in the community, as well as how the program will be sustained financially after County support has ended.

The deadline for submission is the end of November, and the County has partnered with the United Way of Central Ohio to utilize their e-Clmpact platform for the application process. The reviews will occur in December and recommendations for funding to be made to the Commissioners by the end of the year so that grant agreements can be presented for approval early in the first quarter of 2022.

In addition to these competitive awards, the 2022 Recommended Budget also maintains a total of \$4.0 million in Community Partnerships funding for arts and cultural facilities. These dollars are managed in partnership with the Greater Columbus Arts Council to provide support to Franklin County artists, as well as arts and culture organizations, to enhance the cultural image of the Greater Columbus area.

The 2022 Recommended Budget for Community Partnerships also includes \$5 million in COVID-19 Recovery Grants supported by the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund authorized by the American Rescue Plan. The largest of these grants is \$3.5 million for the Mid-Ohio Food Collective for the second half of the County's \$7 million investment in their warehouse expansion project.

Through continued thought leadership and innovation, Mid-Ohio Food Collective is poised to transform emergency feeding in central Ohio. This begins with re-imagining their current warehouse to ensure sufficient cold and frozen storage that will allow us to continue providing our hungry neighbors with the nutrient-dense, perishable foods they need to grow and to thrive.

In order to best meet the evolving needs of our hungry neighbors, the expanded freezer will be located as an addition to the northwest corner of the existing warehouse. This expanded capacity will increase the total number of pallet positions dedicated to frozen foods and will thus significantly increase the total number of picking locations and overall storage. Additionally, this new space will feature a cold dock that will include multiple dock doors that will be exclusively used for loading, unloading, staging, and handling perishable foods.

Currently, the project team is working with the architects to finalize the project scope and design variations to ensure alignment with the project's goals and objectives and approved budget. Attached is a slide featuring the visual rendering of one of the three options that the Mid-Ohio Food Collective's internal team is reviewing. Once the project designs have been finalized, an additional update will be provided.

## **COLABORATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

As part of the Economic Development and Planning Strategic Plan, Franklin County's commitment to regional objectives and sustainable economic development remains unchanged. With support of the American Rescue Plan, a number of initiatives have been undertaken in 2021. A grant of \$2.5 million was provided to the Workforce Development Board of Central Ohio to support the Women Back to Work Initiative. As part of this effort, a One-Day Event will be held to provide women of Franklin County, whose employment has been impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, information on high demand job opportunities, training and education, financial support, mental health support, and mini coaching sessions on career planning.

The Workforce Development Board will also develop and implement a pilot program called "Women @ Work" that will bring women together in three networking cohorts of fifty women each, with focused support to gain employment in high demand occupations, career exploration activities, and individual career paths/plans development to support their employment search activities.

Another grant of \$3 million was provided to Franklin County Stadium, Inc. to offset the negative economic impact due to COVID-19. The funding was used to support its operations, including the avoidance of furloughs and filling vacancies, and maintaining Huntington Park due to the loss of revenue during the pandemic. Franklin County Stadium, Inc. is a non-profit County owned corporation organized under the laws of the State of Ohio that operates Huntington Park; and through its subsidiary, Columbus Baseball, Inc., is the holder of the franchise issued by the International League of Professional Baseball Clubs and is the owner of the Columbus Clippers. Franklin County Stadium, Inc. plays a significant role in creating tourism in Franklin County as a leading force selling, marketing, and attracting visitors to Franklin County.

Travel and tourism will continue to be supported through the 2022 Recommended Budget, maintaining the \$2 million General Fund investment with Experience Columbus. Prior to the pandemic, the Greater Columbus Region welcomed 41 million visitors every year, who directly spent \$7 billion at area businesses. The tourism sector supports nearly 78,000 jobs in Columbus and Franklin County, which is why it is critical to maintain this investment.

Other General Fund investments in economic development included in the 2022 Recommended Budget are the \$2.5 million annual commitment for the development agreement with the City of Columbus and Crew SC Stadium Company for the support of Confluence Village and a Community Sports Park, and \$1 million to One Columbus. One Columbus, the economic development organization for the 11-county region, has set forth a vision for the Columbus Region to be the most prosperous region in the United States. Working in partnership with state and local partners, One Columbus will be focused on helping existing businesses grow and compete, diversifying the economy through the attraction of new businesses, and supporting newly formed high-growth enterprises.

In an effort to expand housing opportunities, the Board of Commissioners approved an increase in the permissive conveyance fee in 2019 dedicated for the purpose of inducing the development of new affordable housing units throughout the county. In order to highlight these investments and ensure the dollars were dedicated to affordable housing, all permissive conveyance fee collections have been deposited in a separate Affordable & Emergency Housing Fund.

One of the new efforts supported by the conveyance fee is the Franklin County Magnet Fund. The purpose of this program is to provide gap financing for the “New Affordability” construction of eligible affordable housing development projects seeking an allocation of 4% Low-Income Housing Tax Credits from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency.

The Commissioners recently approved an agreement with Homeport to provide \$1,350,000 for the development of 100 units of affordable senior housing at the intersection of Cleveland and Myrtle Avenues. All units will be affordable at or under 60% of area median income with 20% of the units to be affordable to extremely low-income households, which is defined as 30% of area median income or just over \$25,000 per year.

Next year, Economic Development & Planning intends to bring forth an additional 10 applications totaling almost \$12 million. These projects are expected to develop an additional 802 units. During 2022, we will be leveraging dollars provided through the American Rescue Plan to support the construction of more affordable housing units along with the use of permissive conveyance fees.

Revenue from the permissive conveyance fee has been resilient throughout the pandemic, supported by the strength of the Central Ohio housing market. The 2022 Recommended Budget for the Affordable & Emergency Housing Fund is \$16 million for these initiatives, including \$5.5 million for the annual contract with the Community Shelter Board and \$3.7 million with the Affordable Housing Trust.

In addition to the support of affordable housing units, the County is working with a number of partners on the distribution of funding from the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. COVID-19 has made worse an affordable housing crisis that predated the pandemic and that has exacerbated deep disparities that threaten the strength of an economic recovery that must work for everyone. To meet this need, the Emergency Rental Assistance program makes funding available to assist households that are unable to pay rent or utilities.

Two separate programs have been established: ERA1 which provided \$25 billion to states and local governments under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and ERA2 which provided an additional \$21.55 billion under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

The County received \$13 million under the ERA1 program, which must be used by September 30, 2022. The County has worked with a number of partners to be able to obligate \$11.5 million of this allocation and will commit the remaining \$1.5 million before year's end. In the six-month period from April to September of this year, the County has assisted over one thousand households through this program. As a result of the demand for this assistance, especially through the PRC Emergency Rental Assistance Program at Job & Family Services, the County has requested an additional allocation of \$2.5 million in ERA1 dollars.

The County's allocation under the ERA2 program is an additional \$10 million. Because ERA2 funding is available through September 30, 2025, the County has prioritized obligating its allocation from the ERA1. As work concludes on the ERA1 program, Franklin County Economic Development & Planning and Job & Family Services will begin to focus on utilizing the ERA2 allocation in the coming months.

The Board of Commissioners, Columbus Urban League, and One Columbus joined together in 2020 to form the Franklin County Business Growth and Equity Alliance. This partnership focuses on implementing economic equity and shared prosperity strategies that improve success outcomes for African American businesses which have been diminished historically by systemic racism, and more recently, the disproportionate detrimental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, the Board of Commissioners provided \$1 million in American Rescue Plan Act Funding to the Columbus Urban League to support the renewal of the Franklin County Community Equity Fund and continue the work of the Minority Small Business Resiliency Initiative.

These investments into the Columbus Urban League and the Equity Alliance have proven critical to support and stabilize small, minority-owned businesses in the region. The Minority Small Business Resiliency Initiative has touched nearly 3,000 businesses in just 16 months. The results have been impressive:

- 82% of investment was disbursed as COVID-19 grants to historically underserved and under-connected Black-owned businesses located in Franklin County.
- 100% of grants went to Black-owned firms with less than 25 employees.
- The Equity Alliance CDFI Feasibility Work Group produced a CDFI fundraising, operations, and sustainability plan to serve local low- to moderate income residents with small business lending.

The creation of a Community Development Financial Institution will link existing community assets and develop gap-filling initiatives to strengthen the regional small business ecosystem. An additional \$1 million in General Fund support has been provided to the Urban League to support this emerging CDFI in making more loans available in Franklin County; and would be the only locally certified CDFI exclusively serving African American and other minority-owned firms and companies doing business in Franklin County.

## **SMART JUSTICE & COMMUNITY SAFETY**

The new James A. Karnes Correction Center is nearing completion on the west side of Franklin County and should be operational within a year. Included in the budget for the Sheriff's Office is \$8 million for the addition of 61 deputies, 8 sergeants, and 20 civilian staff to adequately support the opening of the new corrections center in 2022. These positions have been identified as part of the staffing analysis for the transition and activation services as the Sheriff's Office prepares to move to a direct supervision model.

Direct supervision combines two key elements—the physical design of a jail and an inmate management strategy—to significantly reduce the problem inmate behavior commonly seen in jails. Direct supervision jails focus on actively managing inmate behavior to produce a jail that is safe and secure for inmates, staff, and visitors.

Staff interact continuously with inmates in the housing units, actively supervising them to identify problems in their early stages. They use basic management techniques to prevent negative behavior and encourage positive behavior. Staff assume control of the jail and establish a professional supervisory relationship with inmates. There are no barriers separating staff and inmates in the housing units.

The physical design of the jail supports the management of inmate behavior by reducing physical barriers that impede staff/inmate interaction, by insuring there are clear sight lines into all areas of the housing units, and by incorporating design elements, fixtures, and furnishings that promote positive inmate behavior.

In addition to the staffing for the Sheriff's Office, the 2022 Recommended Budget also includes \$1.9 million for Public Facilities Management to cover the operational costs for utilities and maintenance of the new Corrections Center along with another \$1.7 million to hire 36 new employees to protect and preserve this asset.

In the meantime, the county operates two jail facilities that take in more than 20,000 inmates each year. An average stay at the jail may be several weeks, and a typical stay is more like a few days, but the vast majority of inmates in the Franklin County jail will be returning to their normal lives soon. Unfortunately, that isn't always an easy transition. To meet these needs, the County has created the Rapid Resource Center.

The Rapid Resource Center is a welcoming space near where detainees are released at the Jackson Pike jail facility. At the Rapid Resource Center, staff from the Columbus and Franklin County Public Health Departments, PrimaryOne, Southeast Healthcare, and the Office of Justice Policy and Programs can help the newly released inmates develop plans for transitioning back to the community. They can provide referrals and linkage to health, mental health, and addiction treatment options, as well as a Narcan kit to prevent overdose deaths. They can also help clients apply for benefits, obtain a birth certificate, and connect to emergency food or shelter, or link them to resources such

as how to get a drivers' license reinstated, or where to find job readiness training or new job listings.

Plans are in the works to expand, including with new transportation options, longer hours, peer support, and by opening a Rapid Resource Center at the new Correction Center when it opens. It is estimated that this center will serve a minimum of 500 justice involved individuals and their family members through treatment referral and linkage, supportive services, and transition planning.

The transition from incarceration back to the community can be a tough one, but we can help make it easier and safer with a little support. Successful transitions can reduce the incidence of overdose deaths in the months after release, as well as reducing the chances that an inmate will find themselves in the county jail again in the future.

The Franklin County Office of Justice Policy and Programs, or JPP, is the lead agency in support of programs under the Commissioners' courageous and leading-edge philosophy toward smarter and more equitable justice. One recent project is a partnership with the Abigail Wexner Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital to provide trauma informed counseling and care to children impacted by the incarceration of their fathers and linkages to wrap around supports for their caretakers and other household members.

The children will be provided a suite of Cognitive Behavioral services and matched with mentors facilitated through Big Brothers Big Sisters' "Amachi" mentoring programs. The children's caretakers and other household members will be provided access to My Bridge to Success 'Mentoring Mobility' and connected with other local services and agencies relative to their needs.

Delays caused by the COVID19 Pandemic enabled a thorough examination of the original project goals and demanded program modifications proportionate to real and expected needs of the children and their families. We anticipate up to 150 families will receive services through this program.

While the nation and our community struggled to manage the COVID-19 pandemic another wave was building with rising rates of mental health and substance abuse disorders. In 2020, there were over 800 drug overdose deaths, which is more than a 40% increase from the year before.

To address this, the County has joined other local government and state leaders to be part of the One Ohio plan for the National Opioid Settlement. While no amount is appropriate for the loss of life or impact that opiates has had on families in Franklin County, this plan will allow for an expansion of prevention efforts, invest in treatment, and strengthen our efforts for a sustained recovery.

## **2022 Recommended Budget Message**

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As the details of the settlement are finalized, the 2022 Recommended Budget continues to make investments to address the opioid epidemic. This includes continued support of the Denial Ohio campaign by the Ohio Opioid Education Alliance through contributions to ADAMH, as well support for the Peer Support Specialists at the Rapid Resource Center and the collaboration with the Hope Resource Center on the west side of Columbus through a subgrant award to Justice Policy and Programs that is funded by the Overdose Data to Action Grant.

This is a three-year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that was awarded to Franklin County Public Health in 2019, which brings \$3.9 million a year to our community to fight the opiate crisis, and use the data to inform prevention and response efforts. This includes support for the full-time Overdose Investigation & Intervention Specialist position in the Franklin County Coroner's Office.

As the number of overdose deaths has surged in recent years, so have the demands on the Coroner's Office. In recognition of this, the 2022 Recommended Budget includes four additional full-time positions – a forensic pathologist, morgue technician, investigator, and a toxicology technician. With the addition of these positions, staffing at the Franklin County Coroner's Office will be up 63% since 2015. However, to ensure that the staffing as well as technology needs are being met, plans are underway for an operations review. The intent is for the operations review to provide a long-term plan to address the staffing and technology needs of the Coroner's Office.

In 2019, the Commissioners approved the agreements and contract for the new case management system project. This multi-year project will consolidate eighteen County systems and provide upgraded public access to court documents for the Clerk of Courts' Office, Court of Common Pleas General Division, Court of Common Pleas Domestic Relations and Juvenile Division, Probate Court, and the 10th District Court of Appeals.

The purpose of the project is to create an integrated, secure case management system that provides reliable, efficient, and accurate results to the public and increases the residents' access to justice. The new system, which will replace the Franklin County Justice System that is over 30 years old, will provide enhanced reporting capabilities, real-time data exchange with other County systems, and a more robust security model to combat cyber threats, as well as introduce cloud hosting to reduce the disaster recovery process.

The 2022 Recommended Budget includes \$4.2 million to assist in the implementation of the new case management system. During 2022, Phase 2 is set to conclude with the go-live of the new system for the Probate Court and Phase 3 for the Court of Appeals and Common Pleas Court General Division is set to begin.

## **SUSTAINABLE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

In a review of the highlights of the 2022 Recommended Budget, it is important to discuss some of the efforts that maintain responsive and sustainable government operations for the County's residents. Without our employees, the Commissioners would be unable to sustain their commitment to serving, supporting, and uplifting all residents of Franklin County through a lens of respect, cultural sensitivity and human-centered care.

The 2022 Recommended Budget includes a significant investment in the staffing needs for our County agencies. In addition to the new staffing mentioned earlier in the presentation, the 2022 Recommended Budget includes additional staff for training unit case managers at Job & Family Services, staff to assist with property transfers and reappraisals at the Auditor's Office, and new positions in Human Resources to expand the improvements being made with centralizing human resources functions by producing accurate and consistent payroll procedures across all BOC agencies.

Despite these additions, the trendline shows the number of full-time equivalent positions, or FTEs, has been on the decline over the last decade. The number of FTEs in the 2022 Recommended Budget is 4% less than the number from 2010, declining by 250 full-time positions.

Franklin County's success depends on our ability to attract and retain qualified and committed individuals. This has especially been true during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our employees have been on the front lines every day since the beginning of this crisis, providing excellent service to the residents of Franklin County. To recognize these efforts, the 2022 Recommended Budget includes a proposal to provide up to \$1,500 in premium pay in the upcoming year to employees making less than \$35 per hour. This proposal would be funded through the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund authorized by the American Rescue Plan.

Also supported by the American Rescue Plan is a Vaccine Incentive Program that would provide a \$1,000 incentive for eligible County employees to receive their COVID-19 vaccination. The purpose of this program is to decrease the number of unvaccinated employees or motivate employees to get vaccinated sooner than they otherwise would have; with a goal to increase the percent of vaccinated population by at least 10%.

The Commissioners remain committed to pay equity through "The Columbus Commitment," an initiative of the Columbus Women's Commission that calls on employers to take action to promote gender- and race-based pay equity. County Administration is committed to periodically review our pay structure to ensure that we are operating in a fair and equitable manner.

## **2022 Recommended Budget Message**

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In addition to this internal review, the County will be conducting a classification and compensation review for non-bargaining employees in the upcoming year. This study will include other elected officials and the courts, as we look to align pay structures countywide and assist with retention in this challenging environment. The goal is to have the study completed by mid-year, and dollars are set aside in contingency to begin implementation in 2022.

As we await the results of the study, the 2022 Recommended Budget includes a reserve within the General Fund for non-bargaining pay increases. This reserve includes two components. The first is an amount equivalent to two-and-three-quarters percent of budgeted payroll for non-bargaining employees. This amount is in line with the annual increases in the County's bargaining unit agreements to be authorized by the Board of Commissioners for 2022. The second component is an additional one-and-a-half percent of budgeted payroll in order for appointing authorities to deal with issues of wage compression and/or provide merit increases.

The Franklin County Health Improvement Program continues to be one of the best county health care programs in Central Ohio, and all employees and their families should be applauded for their efforts. It is always exciting to see the active participation of our members in a variety of wellness activities such as preventative health screenings, the ThriveOn Virtual 5K run-walk, and Weight Watchers Reimagined!

After no increases in health care costs for the previous two years, the 2022 Recommended Budget includes a 7% increase as a result of increases in the national trend. The County increase is below the national trend, with medical inflation running at 8%. In order to improve health and wellness programs, the 2022 Recommended Budget includes an additional position to analyze health and employee benefits data to improve the benefits offered to Franklin County employees.

Other benefits that will be part of the compensation package for 2022 is continued participation in the COTA Downtown C-Pass program, which provides a COTA transit pass for each employee as a general benefit at the County. Employees are also encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities, such as training programs through the Human Resources Department's Office of Learning & Staff Development, tuition reimbursement for continuing undergraduate and graduate education, emerging leaders programs, John Glenn College of Public Affairs' Management Advancement for the Public Services seminars at The Ohio State University, and the National Association of Counties' High Performance Leadership Academy.

## **SUMMARY**

The budget we present today places Franklin County on the path to ensuring that every resident's needs are met on the fundamental social, wellness, economic, and environmental levels. As a result of the Board of Commissioners' vision and actions, the 2022 Recommended Budget maintains the County's strong financial position while providing for innovative programming to enable all residents to share in the progress and growth of our community.

As highlighted in today's discussion, we cannot achieve success without collaboration with other governments, nonprofits, the faith community, and businesses to address poverty, increase access to affordable housing, implement smart justice initiatives, and ensure an inclusive economy. We appreciate the many partners who offer their time and talents to collectively address our challenges and identify the opportunities to make our community even better. You are part of the reason thousands of new residents choose to call Franklin County their home each year.

Budget hearings have been scheduled so that an open, public discussion may take place concerning the 2022 Recommended Budget. County Administration looks forward to working with the Board of Commissioners as it deliberates and takes action to finalize the budget.

I would like to thank all of the elected County officials and agency directors for their cooperation and commitment to the residents of Franklin County. Special acknowledgment goes to Zak Talarek, and his team in the Office of Management & Budget for their assistance in developing the 2022 Budget Recommendations.

I can't conclude this address without sharing my appreciation for the work and dedication of Deputy Administrators Erik Janas, Kris Long, and Joy Bivens.

Finally, the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant. With those words from Max DePree, I would like to thank the Board of Commissioners for your continued support and leadership in serving every resident, every day.

**Kenneth N. Wilson, M.P.A., CTA**

County Administrator

Franklin County Board of Commissioners