



THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
CITY COUNCIL

2023 Annual Report

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Council President

Shannon G. Hardin

(he/him/his)

Columbus City Council experienced another historic year in 2023 acting on issues we heard as the priorities of our residents and neighborhood leaders. We listened and we engaged at 63 Council meetings, 29 hearings and more than 100 events and town hall meetings in our neighborhoods. Together with the Mayor, County, nonprofits and businesses, we focused on public safety, building housing for all to address an affordability crisis and preparing our youth and local workforce for the jobs of the future.

One of the biggest changes in 2023 was restructuring Council, which was done for the first time in 100 years. As of January 2, 2024, we've implemented the voter-approved addition of two council seats and moved to an at-large district system to better represent all neighborhoods.

In 2023, Council prioritized neighborhood safety. This includes funding the largest police and fire classes in the City's history which is crucial in improving training, recruitment and retention for our law enforcement and first responders. To address the root causes of crime, we invested in substance abuse prevention, mental health services and our alternative crisis response units. Additionally, we allocated \$20 million to engage youth through summer programming to encourage them to reach their full potential and avoid violence or crime. I'm also proud of kicking off the "We Got US" initiative with the NAACP to encourage family and neighborhood leaders to do their part to make Columbus safer.



We fought to make sure housing and economic development projects incorporated Council's goals to support affordable housing and minority-owned businesses.

Early in 2023, Council announced a package of housing measures to preserve and invest in housing while driving new housing construction. We know with the growth coming to Columbus we must protect tenants while also supporting the production of new housing.



In July, Council passed a \$1.74 billion capital budget with more than \$1.1 billion in neighborhood infrastructure improvements, investments in housing, bikeways and pedestrian safety projects, parks and playgrounds, recreation centers, lighting, pools and spray grounds, safety equipment, a new Hilltop police substation, street resurfacing, and more.

The Council's zoning committee was also busier than ever, paving the way for more than 10,000 new housing units, thousands more than in 2022, underscoring the importance of modernizing our zoning code, which happens in 2024.

Alongside making Columbus a better place for residents, we invested in the City's workforce by expanding paid family leave and creating a new minimum wage of \$20 for city contractors.

On a personal note, I've been delighted to see results from Council investment in the Promise Program which allows hundreds of Columbus City Schools students to attend Columbus State for free with coaching and life support. I'm excited to announce the next phase of the Columbus Promise soon.

As we look ahead to 2024, we will advance a robust agenda, including campaigning for a bold vision for regional transit through LinkUs, which will ask for residents' support on the November 2024 ballot. If passed, it would build out at least five bus rapid-transit routes in Columbus, 500+ miles of protected bike lanes, sidewalks, greenways and more.

I am so excited about what lies ahead. There are challenges before us that will entail asking more of ourselves and of each other. However, in true Columbus fashion, I know that we will come together, stack hands and work toward shaping the future of the city we all deserve.

I summarize the moment in which Columbus finds ourselves as wrestling with the question: how do we get better as we get bigger?

Sincerely,

Shannon G. Hardin
Columbus City Council President





Council President Pro Tem Rob Dorans

(he/him/his)

President Pro Tem Rob Dorans, a proud Ohio native and third-generation union member, meticulously crafted his 2023 legislative agenda to stand up for the well-being of Columbus workers and alleviate the challenges faced by residents across diverse backgrounds. Throughout the year, Dorans presided over the Zoning and Public Utilities committees, marking a transformative period for Columbus.

Under his leadership, the Zoning Committee at Council witnessed the approval of over 10,000 potential new housing units through rezoning and variances, representing a remarkable increase of 3,000 units from the previous year. Recognizing the pivotal juncture in Columbus's housing landscape, President Pro Tem Dorans played a pivotal role in expanding housing opportunities across all neighborhoods in the city. Moreover, his guidance spurred the City of Columbus to embark on a comprehensive overhaul of its outdated zoning code, ensuring a modernized framework that meets the current and future needs of residents, rather than adhering to outdated standards set seven decades ago.



Determined to guarantee fair compensation for those contributing to the City of Columbus, Dorans spearheaded the Council's efforts to revise the Responsible Wage Ordinance, elevating the minimum wage to \$20/hour from the previous \$15.18 as of June 1st, 2023. The ordinance further mandated the public posting of Responsible Wage on the City Website, along with communication to all city agencies. Dorans also championed amendments to Columbus City Codes, requiring contracts for freelance work exceeding \$250, ensuring prompt and full payment to freelancers, and establishing recourse for freelancers if agreements were not honored.



In a groundbreaking move, President Pro Tem Dorans orchestrated a partnership between the Council and the Central Ohio Hospital Council, resulting in the forgiveness of \$335 million in medical debt for Columbus residents treated at the four major area hospital systems. This compassionate initiative brought relief to over 340,000 residents burdened by medical debt, particularly benefiting women, people of color, and households earning less than 400% of the federal poverty level.

Beyond legislative milestones, Dorans collaborated with the Dadass Podcast to address a practical concern for parents. Drawing from personal experiences as a father, he initiated a program to provide small businesses with free baby changing tables for men's and gender-neutral bathrooms. Over 130 businesses responded to the call, leading to Council's approval of \$25,000 to procure nearly 170 baby changing tables, ensuring a more accessible and equitable environment for parents citywide.



Councilmember

Nicholas J. Bankston

(he/him/his)

As a Columbus native, Councilmember Nick Bankston's mission is to invest in the community that has invested in him. In 2023 Bankston served as the Chair for the Economic Development, Small & Minority Business, and Technology committees. Building on the momentum from 2022, Bankston's focus in 2023 revolved around continuing investments in the small business ecosystem, neighborhood and community programs, and Black mothers and their families.



Bankston started the year announcing a historic \$1.2 million of direct support for the small and minority business community. Initiatives include the Columbus Chamber of Commerce's Urban Business Connection program, Experience Columbus' Minority Business Program, and a brand-new capacity building micro-grant program aimed at helping small businesses at a point of growth reach the next stage. Bankston continued investments in ROOTT, a Black women-led reproductive justice organization dedicated to providing prenatal, postnatal, and wraparound support for Black mothers and their families; as well as the Ubuntu Leadership Institute, an intensive six-week educational, leadership, and workforce development program for at-risk adolescent Black males. Bankston also established and ran a Faith-based and community organization grant where 13 grassroots organizations received funding for programs providing services to our youth and families.

Throughout the year, Bankston's office distributed grants to over 30 organizations via discretionary fund dollars and shepherded legislation that improved the operation of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, furthering economic competitiveness and viability. Recognizing Downtown as the heart of the Columbus community, Bankston continued to work on the Ground Floor Growth Initiative. This program aims to diversify and strengthen Downtown's first floor retail environment.

With two years under his belt, Bankston looks forward to continuing to invest and elevate the community that has made him the man he is today. 2024 will be a year of growth, partnership, and inclusion as Bankston fights to ensure that the prosperity of our growing city is shared by everyone who calls Columbus home.





Councilmember **Lourdes Barroso de Padilla**

(she/her/ella)

In 2023, Councilmember Lourdes Barroso de Padilla demonstrated unwavering commitment and leadership as Chair of the Public Service and Transportation, Neighborhoods, Immigrants, Refugee, and Migrant Affairs, and Veteran, Seniors, and Disability Affairs committees by spearheading initiatives that demonstrate her dedication to transit, community, and equity.

Barroso de Padilla led progressive measures to enhance mobility and safety in the city. The introduction of the E-Bikes Rebate Program incentivized sustainable transportation choices, while the piloting of innovative materials and methods for protected bike lanes marked a crucial step towards creating safer environments for cyclists. The installation of bike lockers and the establishment of micro-mobility hubs further facilitated the integration of alternative transportation modes.

Aiming to prioritize pedestrian safety, Barroso de Padilla successfully reduced downtown speed limits to 25 mph and adopted the next 5-year Vision Zero Plan, underscoring her dedication to eliminating traffic-related fatalities. Simultaneously, updates to Traffic Code Standards streamlined the traffic study process, ensuring a more efficient and standardized approach.



In the realm of social and economic justice, Barroso de Padilla's commitment is highlighted by the successful passage of Pay Equity legislation, prohibiting inquiries about an applicant's salary history. This groundbreaking measure aims to rectify wage disparities and promote workplace fairness, leading us to a more equitable Columbus. Furthermore, her sponsorship of changes to Title 39 expanded opportunities for minority businesses to be certified with the city, fostering economic inclusivity.



Barroso de Padilla also continues to promote inclusivity within community engagement. By hosting "Immigrants Make Columbus" town halls, she provided a platform for residents to share experiences and ideas, advancing to a more welcoming city. The Naturalization Ceremony witnessed over 300 individuals becoming citizens, a testament to her commitment to celebrating diversity. Notably, Barroso de Padilla plays a pivotal role in celebrating Latino heritage, sponsoring events such as the Latino Heritage Month parade, art show, and policy day. Her tireless efforts aim to create a more vibrant, inclusive, and equitable community for all residents.



Councilmember **Mitchell J. Brown**

(he/him/his)

Upon his return to Columbus City Council to fill a year vacancy, Councilmember Mitchell Brown hit the ground running, leveraging with the expertise of him and his team. In 2023 Brown chaired the Education and Recreation & Parks Committees, demonstrating commitment to building a safer and more accessible community.

A collaboration with Councilmembers Lourdes Barroso de Padilla, Shayla Favor, and Emmanuel Remy, materialized in Brown's vision of the "Love Our Children, Lock Your Guns" program. 5,000 free gun locks became available for pick-up at every local fire station through a partnership with NBC4 and Columbus Division of Fire. Columbus Public Health also offered free gun boxes through this program. To draw public attention to the program, NBC4 aired a special program which featured Brown discussing the importance of gun safety. He emphasized how properly securing firearms is a proactive step to decrease the frequency of children obtaining a gun.



In line with his dedication to community safety, Brown initiated training sessions for city employees of CPR and Narcan delivery, a collaboration with the Columbus Division of Fire. Brown is also a committed advocate for improving safety for individuals with disabilities. As chair of the Recreation & Parks Committee, he sponsored resolutions to renovate the Franklin Park Adventure Center. This serves as the home to the City's Therapeutics Recreation and Adaptive Sports Clubs, providing access to sports and recreation for those with disabilities. Brown also sponsored legislation to audit and adapt City parks to become ADA (American with Disabilities Act) compliant.



To improve the atmosphere of the community, Brown sponsored the implementation of the Urban Forestry Master Plan that first passed in 2021. City tree code now requires trees to be replaced when removed from city-owned or adjacent land. This initiative was aimed at growing the Columbus' tree canopy to reduce heat and utility bills while providing a more pleasant environment.



Councilmember Shayla D. Favor

(she/her/hers)

2023 marked Councilmember Shayla Favor's fourth year on City Council, and it was her team's busiest yet, as she chaired the Housing and Health & Human Services committees. Over the past 12 months, Favor's office has focused its efforts on empowering Columbus residents through providing access to key social services and public health resources and leading the charge on Council's 2023 Housing Initiatives.



This has been a pivotal year for housing within Columbus. In March, Council launched its 2023 Housing Initiatives with proposals aimed at reducing housing insecurity, inequities within the housing market, and ensuring tenant protections. One of these proposals included "Pay-to-Stay" legislation that would enable tenants a lawful affirmative defense against eviction. Ohio is one of a handful of states in which a tenant can face eviction for failing to pay as little as a penny in rent, and this policy ensure that this is no longer the case in the City of Columbus.

Favor also unveiled the 2nd iteration of the Housing for All campaign, an effort to promote the multitude of available housing resources to residents across the City. This campaign has culminated in a number of insightful discussions with residents on how we as a City can improve our housing landscape.

In addition to fighting for healthy housing opportunities, Favor was also focused on promoting public health through preventing youth tobacco usage. In December 2022, Favor sponsored legislation restricting the sale of flavored tobacco within Columbus, and this year, her office embarked on a cessation campaign to build on this prior success. Flavored tobacco is an addictive substance that has long-term health impacts on its users, most of which are still relatively unknown, and with these products being marketed to Columbus youth, this campaign is an avenue to protect the long-term well-being of their future by providing them with the knowledge and resources to stem tobacco usage.





Councilmember

Emmanuel V. Remy

(he/him/his)

In 2023, Councilmember Emmanuel Remy was dedicated to making Columbus a safer, cleaner, and greener city for all residents. He proudly served as the chair of the Administration, Environment, and Public Safety Committees.

Remy's commitment to public safety manifested in multiple approaches, including holding hearings on alternative crisis response and violence prevention. He unveiled Public Safety Week, a series of events where Community members were able to learn essential safety procedures, equip themselves with safety resources, and meet with the Columbus Divisions of Fire and Police.



Additionally, Remy supported initiatives like the "Love Our Children, Lock Your Guns" program to distribute thousands of free gun locks to Columbus residents and invested \$20.1 million in summer youth grants. This includes programs such as Teen and Police Service (TAPS), to reduce the social distance between at-risk youth and law enforcement personnel serving their communities and Public Safety Corps (PSC), a worksite-based program for young men and women between 14-20 years of age that provides knowledge, skills, and practical experience through education and training delivered by public safety professionals.



Recognizing the importance of safety through care and shelter, Remy is passionate about equipping women and caregivers with proper resources. He championed the expansion of paid parental and caregiver leave for city employees to 12 weeks of paid leave at 100% of their salary. Remy also led the approval of \$500,000 of funding for LSS CHOICES, the only domestic violence shelter in Franklin County.

As chair of the Environment committee, Remy was also focused on making Columbus a greener place. Leading the 2nd Annual Cleaner Columbus Citywide Cleanup, Remy helped increase the number of volunteer clean-ups citywide and fostered community awareness through education and partnerships.

Community Engagement Team

Through intentional outreach efforts and constituent services in 2023, Columbus City Councilmembers and their teams spent more than 725 hours combined engaging residents of the City of Columbus. Council engaged with residents of every neighborhood and with numerous constituencies as we educated the community about the new districting system. Discussions and events focused on a variety of policy topics pertinent to the Councilmembers' priorities including safety and housing. For example, the We Got Us campaign created community awareness to take responsibility for our own safety and the safety of our neighbors through taking a citywide pledge.



The Community Engagement Team also facilitated a wide variety of events to educate and connect the community. Monthly Snack and Learns provided in-depth information sessions on various topics like establishing a neighborhood block watch and becoming a vendor with the City of Columbus. Council Community Meetings, hosted on each side of town, provided community members the opportunity to talk one-on-one with Councilmembers. The Capital Budget Bus Tours allowed Councilmembers to be mobile as they heard about neighborhood priorities while educating the community on the Capital Budget process, and the Area Commissioner Recruitment Event provided education to interested constituents regarding what it means to be an area commissioner.

Columbus City Council prioritizes amplifying and honoring the diversity within our community. That's why the Community Engagement Team hosted cultural dinners and celebrations. Whether the Diwali Festival, Black History Month events, the Hispanic Heritage Month Parade, Pride Celebrations, Iftar, Passover Seder, and the City's inaugural Africa Day, community members had the chance to celebrate our commonalities and the distinctions that make us unique. Other notable events include the Summer Splash Series and the various Litter Pick-Up events that allowed the community to engage with council while making Columbus a cleaner place.

With over 100 community events hosted in 2023, residents had abundant opportunities outside of regularly scheduled Columbus City Council meetings to engage with Councilmembers. As the calendar turns to 2024, City Council and the Community Engagement team look forward to a new year of opportunities to intentionally engage the constantly evolving Columbus community.



Legislative Research Office

The Legislative Research Office (LRO) accomplished a tremendous amount in 2023. By learning from national best practices, our policy team crafts Columbus-based approaches to address issues confronting residents. Most of the year was also spent in preparation for the expansion of the Council in 2024, educating the community on the impending change to our local electoral system.

As the community's need for affordable housing continues to grow as fast as the city does, LRO is responding with new policy initiatives. Council's housing agenda evolved into its next phase with the launch of Housing 2.0 this year. Our policy team helped by ushering in critical initiatives like pay-to-stay and third-party payment, helping secure residents in their housing.

One of the most impactful initiatives that LRO spearheaded in 2023 was the coordination with local hospital to forgive \$335 million in medical debt for residents. During this process, LRO explored the experiences of other cities but ultimately recognized that there are factors that make our city different and in turn our solutions different. We chose a cost-effective, broad-based approach that served as a valuable lesson that underscored the need to recognize that Columbus questions need Columbus answers.

The great virtue of policy work is that it is never complete and there will always be opportunities to be of service. 2023 offered a chance to revisit and reinforce key principles: access to reproductive choice, incentivizing equitable transportation, encouraging small business and entrepreneurship, and pursuing clean, safe, affordable neighborhoods, replete with good-paying jobs. As 2024 brings new challenges, Council will rise to the occasion with the support of the Legislative Research Office.



City Clerk's Office

The Columbus City Clerk's Office provides essential administrative support to Columbus City Council and their teams. This includes a wide range of internal activities ensuring efficient operations and adherence to local/state laws. In 2023, the City Clerk's office meticulously prepared agendas and minutes for 63 Council and Zoning meetings. Additionally, the office assumes responsibility for overseeing more than 74 distinct tasks by serving as Council's official record keeper.

Examples of these records are the Domestic Partnership and Legislative Agent registries. The Domestic Partnership Registry is an optional means for domestic partners to record their relationship. This process is intended to reduce the burden on businesses and institutions by clarifying existing relationships. To provide greater accountability and transparency for hired agents, the Legislative Agent Registry requires lobbyists to disclose information about their clients as well as their engagement in relevant legislation/issues.

The Office of Ethics & Campaign Finance and Office of Fiscal & Grants Management are also housed within the Clerk's office. The former provides guidance and counsel to Columbus elected officials, candidates, and employees on ethics, standards of conduct, conflicts of interest and campaign finance. The Office of Fiscal & Grants Management ensures that all required documentation for grant agreements and contracts are received and processed. In addition to grant management, the office creates budgets, produces quarterly reports, processes bills, and maintains contracts.

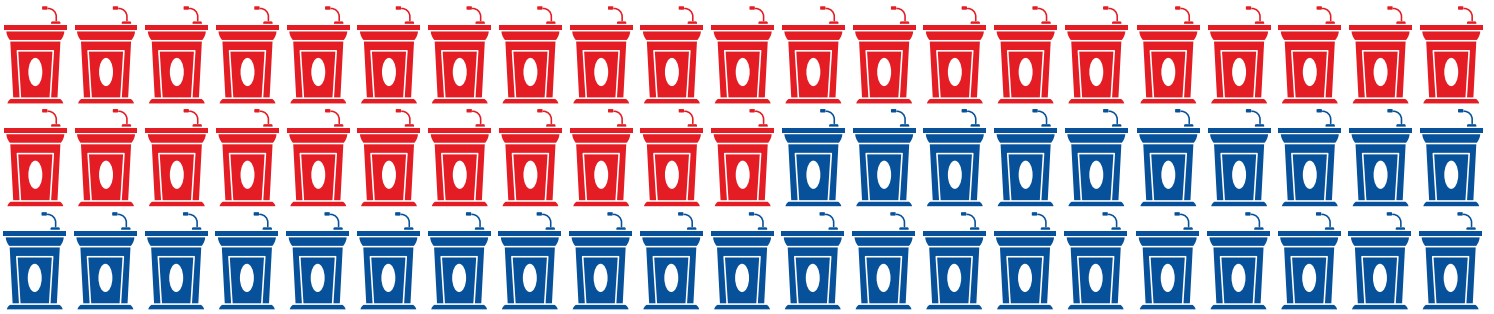
While this overview does not encompass the entirety of the Clerk's office duties, it provides a glimpse inside the work of the Columbus City Clerk. The office is excited to continue providing support the new expanded Columbus City Council and City staff in 2024.



By The Numbers

In 2023...

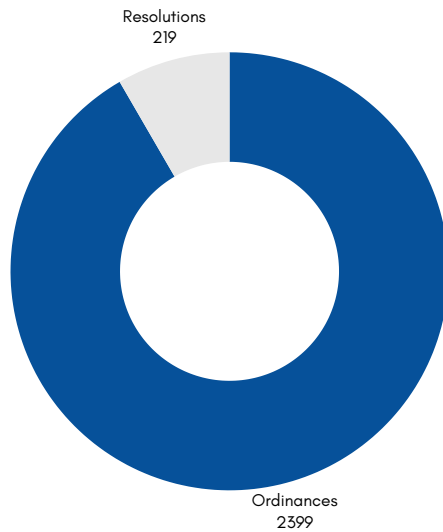
Columbus City Council held **63 meetings**



■ Regular Meeting ■ Zoning Meeting



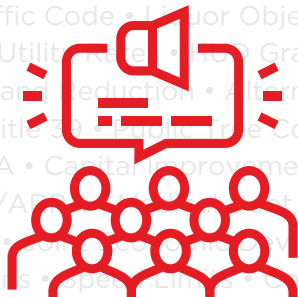
Council passed **2,618** pieces of legislation



Council received **268 requests** from residents to speak at our weekly meetings



Housing • Traffic Code • Minor Objections • Noise Code • Public Utilities • Grants • Violence Prevention and Reduction • Alternative Crisis Response • Title 22 • Code • Zone-In Columbus • CRA • Capital Improvement • Vision Zero • CARES/ERA/AF • Relief • Mobile Food Vending • Economic Development • Pay Equity Solutions • Council Vacancy



Council hosted **29 Public Hearings**

Council hosted **15 press conferences** and earned **307 news stories** on various media platforms

