Mayor Fischer's 2022-23 budget remarks

April 28, 2022

On Thursday, April 28, 2022, Mayor Fischer delivered his recommended budget for the 2022-23 fiscal year. Below are his remarks.

See more details at louisvilleky.gov/budget

Standing here today I think of Muhammad Ali, Louisville's favorite son, and how he only counted his sit-ups when they started hurting, because they're the only ones that count.

We've had budgets over the years that reminded me of those sit-ups Muhammad would count – the choices we had to make were often painful! Fortunately, that's not the case with the budget I am recommending, because of the resources we now have.

Today I am presenting to you the operating and capital budgets for Fiscal Year 23, as well as outlining how the federal American Rescue Plan and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will impact our city over the coming years, with potentially over \$1 billion for initiatives and projects coming our way.

We have never seen the amount of funding we have received from the federal government in the past couple of years with ARP and BIL, plus funds from CARES and the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, and they provide us with opportunities for generational change.

Can I get an Amen?!

Before we dive into the numbers, let's remember what a budget, along with vision, innovation and hard work, can produce.

The past 11 budgets have paid off – making our city stronger and more vibrant, improving our quality of life, and preparing our city to withstand powerful challenges.

Among those investments:

The Ohio River Bridges Project, with 32 million vehicle crossings last year; the very existence of these two bridges, after 40 years of discussion, is emblematic of our progress.

The Big Four Bridge has become a great source of recreation, and probably the most culturally diverse gathering spot in our increasingly global city.

20,000 people moving out of poverty and 20,000 families moving into the middle class.

More than \$475 million for affordable housing, eviction prevention, home repairs and to tackle homelessness.

80,000 new jobs and 3,500 new companies.

Working with intentionality to make Louisville a soccer city, with world-class women's and men's teams, an extraordinary soccer stadium, training facility and youth academy, and we were named one of WalletHub's best soccer cities in America.

Creating and scaling a new hospitality concept – Bourbonism, with Louisville as the trailhead, resulting in 10 new distillery and bourbon experiences, wonderful culinary additions, an energized Whiskey Row and 15 new hotels in just downtown alone.

And unprecented investments in our residents, through libraries, parks, housing, health care and so many areas that have made monumental differences in people's lives.

We've laid the groundwork, and the budget I am presenting today plants seeds for future progress.

The strong economy that supports it shows that Metro is returning to pre-pandemic revenue levels, and that's great news – we've all counted more than enough sit-ups to arrive at this moment.

Briefly:

The overall budget is increasing from \$1.1 billion to \$1.3 billion.

Our total general fund is \$715 million, reflecting an increase of \$57 million over the current year.

Because of significant funding from federal, state, foundations and other sources, we are able to present a capital budget of \$343 million, compared to \$167 million in FY22.

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Improve health for all Louisvillians ...

Continue a dedication to lifelong learning and entrepreneurship ...

and be a compassionate city that underscores our interdependence and lifts up opportunities for all to reach their full human potential.

At the beginning of my first term, because of a historic recession, we faced a \$22.5 million deficit, 10 percent unemployment and tremendous anxiety about the future.

And, a year and a half after being re-elected to a third term, we experienced a tragic, once-in-a-century pandemic and righteous calls for racial justice throughout the country, including Louisville, a movement not seen in fifty years.

Between those two seminal challenges, we reshaped our municipal government, pruning and planting along the way, to reflect 21st century realities and plan for our future ... for all areas of Louisville.

As in life, we must change or wither away. We have responded by reshaping and modernizing Metro Government to meet 21st Century challenges and seize on 21st Century opportunities.

That modernization is why we created:

an Office for Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods,

an Office of Equity,

Louisville Forward,

an Office of Sustainability,

an Office for Performance Improvement and Innovation.

an Office for Globalization, and

One Water, which has helped keep consumer rates lower and is working to regionalize water and sewer services.

Our stewardship has also meant balancing the budget while maximizing the efficiency of the revenue generated by hard-working taxpayers.

As expected, this oversight has required a lot of difficult decisions.

In 2011, when I took office, we had 5,400 full-time employees. Now we have about 5,000.

While some of this was because of intentional efficiencies, hard choices also had to be made. We have continued to deliver services, and grow our city, all while having fewer and fewer employees.

We have been recognized nationally for these efforts.

Louisville is one of only two cities to ever achieve What Works top-level Platinum Certification for our use of data to guide our work and to achieve top bond ratings – AAA and Aa1 from Fitch's and Moody's.

We have received these recognitions because of measurable, quantifiable results. For instance:

We have made \$21.5 billion in capital investments, which aren't just bricks and mortar, they transform a community and people who live there.

They've included:

new libraries in south central, south west and east Louisville,

the comeback of Colonial Gardens.

Slugger Field, and

historic investments in west Louisville, such as Beecher Terrace, Russell a Place of Promise, Louisville Urban League's Norton Healthcare Sports and Learning Center, the West End Opportunity Partnership, and the westward expansion of Waterfront Park.

This fiscal year alone, Louisville Forward competed for and won 43 business attraction and expansion projects, with a financial commitment of more than \$1 billion and over 4,300 jobs.

Our economic development focus keeps our economy pumping through pandemic and inflation. It was well-designed to grow and withstand downturns

Logistics will continue to grow with increasing online activities.

The Aging and Wellness sector will grow with an older America.

Advanced manufacturing will continue to grow, fueled by spin offs from the recently announced electric vehicle battery manufacturing plant.

And food and beverage businesses will continue to surge with Bourbonism.

And it's not just numbers – you can see it all around you.

Workers and conventions are returning to downtown. Just last week, Louisville welcomed 12,000 conventiongoers to our city.

It was great to see our sidewalks, coffee shops, hotels and businesses once again bustling with people.

But we must recognize that downtowns are forever changed by the pandemic, and many office jobs are now being done from home.

The community will welcome Louisville Downtown Partnership's upcoming 10-year strategic plan to help us address that shift.

The overall resurging economy is what funds this budget, and, as the economic engine of the state, the entire Commonwealth benefits from our hard work and successes.

This budget proposal will continue our momentum.

It keeps public safety as priority No. 1.

It maintains a responsible eye on expenses.

It is dedicated to delivering quality, modern services, through continuous improvement and innovation.

And it is done with an equity lens on all our operations and efforts.

Let's start with public safety

As it has been throughout my three terms as mayor, public safety remains my No. 1 priority. Nothing else matters if our people are not safe and able to live and work comfortably throughout our city.

We are currently experiencing a reduction, year-to-date, of 15% in violent crime, 35% reduction in shootings and an overall reduction in the crime rate of 8%.

It's no secret that gun violence is a problem all across America, and right here at home. And our criminal homicide numbers are about the same as last year's ... and that is just unacceptable.

So, with efforts grounded in best practices and community involvement, we are funding law enforcement, violence-interruption programs and initiatives to re-build trust between police and the community they serve.

As the city of Breonna Taylor, Lousiville has the responsibility to lead America in rebuilding this trust.

We can be pro-reform and pro-police. We can be pro-accountability for those committing crimes, and pro-investment in our people, so they never go down a path of violence.

This budget funds three LMPD recruit classes with a goal of bringing our police headcount to 1,100 by the end of FY23, including laterals and rehires. This is part of a three-year plan to get LMPD staffing up to 1,200 by the end of FY25.

To enhance LMPD training, we're allocating \$6 million for the first phase of building a new facility – land acquisition and design.

Our whole-of-government approach to public safety also continues a robust non-law enforcement response to violence in our communities, through a number of efforts:

We created the Office for Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods in 2013 to develop and nurture safe neighborhoods where everyone is secure, free of violence and prepared for success.

With federal ARP funds, we have only recently begun to adequately fund this critical work, and this budget continues that funding.

Our Group Violence Intervention program brings together law enforcement, social services, and faith-based partners to connect with drivers of violence to prevent further violence, to build trust and to support at-risk residents, and enhance accountability for participants.

Our new Office of Youth Development advocates for youth to help them achieve equitable, happy and healthy lives, and is using \$8.5 million in ARP funding to, over three years, create a data-driven youth development system for 10- to 24-year-olds.

Public safety also means giving our kids safe places to be – off the streets and out of trouble, especially at times of day when parents are not at home.

That's why I am proposing \$412,000 to expand hours and programming at community centers.

An important public safety initiative is our Community Ambassadors Program. Ambassadors work block-by-block in Downtown, Waterfront Park, west and South Louisville and Bardstown Road, answering questions and keeping areas clean.

We're proposing \$880,000 for the program.

We know cleanliness sets the tone of our city, and we've seen great results with the Clean Collaborative, which brings together employees from throughout Metro Government to coordinate and maximize efforts to keep our neighborhoods clean.

That's why we're adding another \$500,000 to expand their work.

And, because safe and smooth roads and sidewalks are also critical for each and every neighborhood, this budget includes \$22 million for roads and sidewalks, and \$500,000 for scooter and bike lanes.

That's on top of 2,000 miles of roads we have paved since I took office.

FY23's projects span the city, and include:

South Watterson Trail from Bardstown to Hurstbourne

More improvements for Dixie Highway

And Catalpa Street, from Virginia Avenue to Wilson Avenue.

The Kentucky General Assembly recently passed its biennial road plan, including almost \$380 million in projects for Louisville, such as:

the widening and realignment of US 60;

an extension project at Urton Lane and Plantside Drive that will include a three-lane route, and bicycle and pedestrian accommodations; and

design money to improve safety at the southbound ramp to I-65 at Brook Street.

To maintain our efforts to build the critical trust needed between law enforcement and the communities they serve, this budget continues to fund the recommendations offered by the Hillard Heintze report, and the Truth and Transformation and Lean Into Louisville efforts.

And the the very promising Police Activities League, to build connections between youth and police, will experience its first full year of activity.

In other areas of public safety:

For our firefighters, \$1.4 million for a burn building, a specialized structure used to train firefighters; plus funding for a Louisville Fire recruit class that will start in May 2023.

We will fund security, safety and facility improvements for the Department of Corrections, including a \$3.7 million capital investment for an expansion of camera systems, additional monitoring equipment for observations of high-risk inmates, and more body scanners at entrances.

And, in Emergency Services, we will continue funding for the 911 call prioritization and deflection program. We launched the pilot program last month and are adapting as it moves forward, working to reduce police responses for people who need help but don't need the police.

This budget also includes almost \$11.5 million to complete a \$28.9 million state-of the-art computer-aided dispatch and records management system.

And we're investing \$1.25 million in a new Mobile Emergency Operations Center.

Just two weeks ago, when a tornado hit near Fern Creek, our mobile center was pulled off a SWAT call-out to help respond to the tornado. As we see more weather-related emergencies, a new vehicle with the most up-to-date technology, is critical for redundancy.

What you just heard is a list of aggressive investments to make our city safer and more secure.

We must just as aggressively fund tools to lift up each individual so they can achieve success and happiness.

One of the main reasons I ran for a third term was to ensure funding for our Evolve502 promise scholarship program. This community partnership works to ensure every JCPS student can go to college tuition-free.

To date, Evolve502 has received enough funding so that all students 8th grade and up are eligible.

This is one of the greatest accomplishments we have achieved together.

By ensuring access to a college education for public school student, we are removing the No.1 barrier to poverty.

Anaiya Miller, 19, born and raised in Louisville, was a STEM student at Central High School, and had a passion for science and medicine.

She was excited to attend a four-year university, but then her counselor, Ms. Kennina Porter, told her she was eligible for an Evolve502 tuition-free scholarship to a two-year instutition, and could then transfer her credits to a four-year college.

Anaiya thought Ms. Porter was kidding.

Free?

The more she considered it, the more she realized it was an incredible opportunity.

Her thinking: get a head start for free, and then head to a four-year institution to complete her degree.

Now she is an Evolve502 promise scholarship student at JCTC, studying nursing. Tuition-free.

And she tells all her friends "Take advantage of the Evolve 502 Promise scholarship. Take it seriously. And do what you love."

Anaiya and her counselor Ms. Porter are both here today. Thank you both!

To expand the the dream of college and credentials, in this budget, Metro government will contribute another \$3 million grant with a matching requirement, meaning we will now be able to provide scholarships to all JCPS middle school students, 6th grade and up!

This is legacy work, changing the trajectory of individual futures, families and our collective future... great job, everybody!

We are investing in our people's futures in other ways.

We are allocating \$600,000 to KentuckianaWorks for the Kentucky College Access Center, a one-stop center that helps users file for financial aid, search for schools, explore occupations, complete admissions applications and more.

SummerWorks, our program to provide youth with summer jobs, and make all-important contacts for their future, has been a smashing success in its 12 years, placing more than 36,000 kids in jobs with 240 employers. We want to continue its impact with \$1 million in this budget.

There is a universal need to increase tech talent in every industry, so we must rapidly scale our tech workforce. We will fund the award-wining Code Louisville initiative with \$500,000, enabling more Louisvillians to move to better-paying jobs with greater stability and potential.

I also want to mention we're maintaining our \$279,000 commitment to the Another Way Program of Goodwill Industries.

The Metro Council identified this program that uses a van to pick up houseless people and takes them to job sites to work for meals and stipends.

It also connects them with opportunities for employment, transitional or permanent housing and substance abuse treatment centers. Let's keep it going.

Libraries, and their lifelong learning benefits, have been an absolute priority throughout my administration, and we have much to show for that.

Four brand-new libraries built, several others expanded and modernized; and we ended fines and fees for late materials at the library last year, something this budget continues.

And, earlier this week we announced a plan to use federal American Rescue Plan funds to:

open two more new libraries, in Parkland and Fern Creek;

to dramatically renovate and modernize the Main Library so that it provides the same amenities as our other new regional libraries; and to expand the Portland Library.

Our ARP funds are also going to support health and community in the form of pools and parks, including \$5 million for Algonquin and Norton pools, \$500,000 each for Iroquois and Elliott Parks, and \$200,000 for Berrytown Park.

And, ARP funds also are going to preserve and expand the historic Baxter Community Center in the heart of the Russell neighborhood, as well as create a new park at 13th and Muhammad Ali.

Our award-winning Zoo is launching a unique exhibit – the Kentucky Trails. The State budget just passed included \$10 million for this project. My proposed budget includes \$5 million for this project, to be matched by \$5 million from private donations.

The trails on 20 undeveloped acres at the Zoo will be an extensive, interactive, natural experience providing up-close encounters with animals native to our area. Our fantastic zoo will just keep getting better and better.

And we're recommending \$200,000 to complete the parking lot at Louisville Metro Animal Services. This is the final component of our beautiful new complex that takes care of vulnerable animals in our community.

Waterfront Park is receiving \$4 million, also with a match requirement. On top of other commitments, that means there is now an opportunity for a \$30 million westward expansion between 9th and 15th streets, using local, state and private funds.

We have been through so much together, as a city, as a nation, in particular in the last two years. In Louisville, we have had more than 230,000 confirmed cases of COVID, along with 2,300 tragic deaths.

As we learn to live with COVID-19, we all want ways to get out of the house, to be safely around others, to share in the joy of our recovery from such challenging times.

I believe one way to address this collective trauma is through the power of the arts.

Trappist monk and great spiritual thinker Thomas Merton, who had his epiphany on the corner of 4th and Walnut right here in Louisville, said, "Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time."

With \$1.3 million in this budget we will launch Louisville HeARTS, a unique initiative with the Fund for the Arts and the Louisville Orchestra to bring the healing power of the arts to every neighborhood in the city.

We appreciate Metro Council's interest in this initiative and I thank you in advance for participating and nominating youth for a new youth arts council.

The arts bring us together, they challenge and delight us, they improve our mental health and, I truly believe they can help bring some relief to so many who have been in pain over the past few years.

We also know we need to address our community's physical health needs.

Among the great heroes of the past two years is the team at our Public Health Department. Louisville is one of the few cities whose brown and black residents did not suffer a disproportionate impact from COVID-19.

That did not happen by accident, but by design and the tireless efforts of the team at Public Health and community partners over the years. Congratulations on this major accomplishment.

We have used CARES and ARP funding so our Public Health Department can carry out and continue to carry out this monumental word and this budget funds their work at \$24.7 million, a \$3.9 million increase.

Health includes environmental health. That's why I created the city's first Office of Sustainability, recognizing the threat of climate change and the role the city plays in minimizing its risks and hazards.

The Office has helped to shape our climate change goals, and the city recently received LEED Silver certification for our sustainability work; we also have an A rating with the global environmental nonprofit, CDP.

Commitment to a sustainable future requires vision and action, and that goes double when we can marry sustainability with economic development.

The Environne Institute at UofL is leading the world in the study of health as a social and environmental condition, not just an individual one

Right now, the city has an opportunity to partner with UofL to bring researchers, students, residents and visitors together, which will also help with the needed return of people to support our post-COVID downtown.

This budget would invest \$6 million toward that goal contingent on three things:

That they can guarantee at least \$30 million from other sources.

That it will give us a global model of sustainable urban building complex and park that is a new downtown attraction.

And that they will become a research partner to Metro Government in our efforts to improve Louisville's health.

To that I say, "Go Cards!"

This budget includes a new Energy Innovation Fund with its first \$700,000 funded from successful energy savings.

We are also including \$600,000 to plant new trees and other environmental resiliency efforts.

To lead a healthy and successful life we know it is critical that folks have a place to call their own. Maya Angelou said, "The ache for home lives in all of us. The safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned."

During the time I've been in office, it has been an honor to invest \$106 million in affordable housing. That compares to \$7 million provided by previous Metro administrations. This is another great testament to our teamwork.

Council has been a huge partner and I specifically want to recognize Budget Chair Bill Hollander for his tireless efforts as a champion for affordable housing.

That being said, we have so much more to do. That's why this budget includes an additional \$10 million to build affordable housing.

Plus, we are including:

\$3.4 million to repair and maintain homeownership in low-income areas.

And down payment assistance of \$3 million to increase homeownership among low- to moderate-income households.

I am particularly grateful for the power of this life-changing, wealth-building program. Trisha Miller, a single mother, lived in an apartment with a lot of problems and lacking the amineties she needed.

She set the goal of owning her own home, to become her family's first homeowner. She worked extra shifts and saved her money, and a friend told her about the Down Payment Assistance program. She applied and qualified.

The first time in her own home, she said she sat on the floor of the empty house and said, "I can't believe this is ours." A home and more; a "godsend," she said.

Trisha is here today, a great success from Metro's downpayment program. Congratulations, Trisha and family!

We are also continuing significant investments to address the needs of those who are not housed, including the Hope Village, our Safe Outdoor Space, which opened today.

A place of hope, indeed: thermal shelter tents for unhoused people, with showers, toilets, access to electricity and food, and on-site health care, mental health counseling, and job training.

This budget also restores funding for Metro Council's NDF and office accounts, bringing them to \$75,000 and \$30,000, respectively, and maintains their \$100,000 capital infrastructure funds per district.

We know council members have their ears to the ground, and can target those funds for critical neighborhood-level needs.

Workforce challenges exist in virtually industry in America, and we in Metro Government are no exception.

We have boosted pay to increase retention and encourage recruitment, we have made and continue to make tech investments to support our employees' missions at work, and we have enacted parental leave, to give them the support they need to be there for their families.

This budget continues those investments, along with a two percent cost-of-living increase for non-union employees. Union members compensation components will follow their contracts.

Our team members have sacrificed deeply to serve the people of Louisville, especially our first responders who put their lives on the line for our safety and security. We owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude.

Sadly, during my time as Mayor, 11 Metro employees have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Today, national Workers Memorial Day, I would like to recognize each one of them:

Zachary Cottongim

But it's not just police officers, firefighters.

Timothy Groft

Trent Haines

Hassan Hassan

Martez Hughes

Larry Kizer

Richard Longoria

John Martin

Deidre Mengedoht

Nicholas Rodman, and

Thomas Talley

And, I would like to recognize Dr. SarahBeth Hartlage, who tragically passed recently, and who saved countless lives leading our COVID-19 relief efforts.

Let's pause for a moment of reflection.

Our investments – made in our people and our places – have paid off over the past twelve years, moving people out of poverty and into housing, creating new businesses and a stronger workforce.

And I believe the proposed investments in this budget will pay off in the future.

We must also acknowledge some of the funding that has made these investments possible.

The nation is fortunate to have the leadership of President Joe Biden and his administration who came to the, yes, rescue, of this nation.

And we in Louisville are thankful for our Congressman, John Yarmuth, chair of the Budget committee in Congress, whose great 16-year career in government is capped with this achievement.

The impact of the federal CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan Act cannot be overestimated. The funding from these federal laws literally saved lives and households during the worst of COVID-19, and the investments made will be felt for years.

We also are planning for projects made possible by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which could bring Louisville hundreds of millions in infrastructure investment.

That's a historic opportunity and why we are recommending \$1.5 million for additional resources to prepare for the anticipated projects.

Also, many of these projects require a match from local government, skin in the game, so we will set aside \$30 million for those matches, making us better able to compete for these transformational opportunities.

This money is a contingency fund and will only be spent IF we are selected for the competitive grants.

We, those of us here in this room, have done a great job balancing our budgets and making needed investments. But we've had help to recover from the pandemic in the form of federal funds – ARP and CARES.

In the coming years, when these funds go away, the next Mayor and you, the Council, will need to make decisions on which programs to continue, while considering factors like revenue growth, workforce and pension requirements and expense reductions.

To help with this challenge, my budget recommends adding \$10 million to the Rainy Day Fund, and \$15 million to address future budget shortfalls.

For the upcoming fiscal year, I am comfortable that we have proposed a responsible budget that both responds to today's needs and continues to position Louisville and its great people for success.

Since 2011, our budget, and our world has evolved. And since 2020, so many have suffered pain. This budget honors that pain, recognizes our unlimited potential, and celebrates the future.

Because, as Ali said, "It's not what happens when you get knocked down, it's what happens when you get back up."

My team and I always believed in the future of our city. We never wavered, never abandoned our values or each other, and kept fighting for each and every Louisvillian.

I want to thank Deputy Mayor Ellen Hesen and my entire Metro team for their stalwart determination and never-ending hard work.

We stayed the course, firmly focused on the needs of our residents, and our city has emerged stronger and more capable than ever.

In my first budget address, we were confronted with harsh, post-recession truths and the budget I presented reflected those.

Despite all the challenges, I said that if we took necessary steps, we could "become what we all know we can be: One of the most vibrant, one of the most entrepreneurial and one of the most compassionate cities in the world."

We have traveled far in that journey together. And I truly believe Louisville, from corner to corner, neighborhood to neighborhood from 2011 through 2020 and now 2022, with its residents shining like the sun, has become one of the most vibrant, one of the most entrepreneurial and one of the most compassionate cities in America.

I see it every day - in old and young, in you and in my team, in businesses and schools. And this budget keeps that going.

To the Metro Council, we have much work ahead and I look forward to working together to continue our city's momentum.

Thank you for your partnership.

I would be nowhere without the love and support of my family, then, now, and always. My wife, Dr. Alex Gerassimides, is here today, and so is my sister, Lynn Fischer. Thank you both for everything.

And I want to thank the people of Louisville for entrusting the well-being of their loved ones and the future of their city in our hands for these past twelve years.

It is my honor to be your mayor. With eight months left in my administration, to paraphrase Ali, we are not counting the days, we are making the days count!

We still have a lot of work to do, and we will be running through the finish line!

Thank you.

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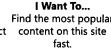
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