



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

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## **MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN'S 2022-23 RECOMMENDED CITY BUDGET PRESENTATION, WITH REFLECTIONS ON THE STATE OF THE CITY AND ITS FUTURE**

*As prepared, on Friday, April 29, 2022*

*Opening Video Presentation: Building a Buffalo without Boundaries*

<https://vimeo.com/702133288/10a21b06e4>

Good morning. I want to thank actor and Buffalo native Bill Fichtner for that inspiring introduction. A special thank you to Northland Workforce Training Center and Stephen Tucker for hosting our event today. Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to take a moment to recognize the passing of Councilmember Christopher Scanlon's father, John Scanlon. A long time public servant and beloved community member. Please keep the Scanlon family in your prayers. Buffalo has come a long way and there's so much further we can go. I am pleased to welcome all of you to my 2022-23 Recommended Budget presentation where I will share my thoughts on the present state of our City and the great potential I see for our future.

I stand before you as Buffalo's longest-serving Mayor. In 2006, times were tough. Businesses had left the City, taking with them the jobs our people depended on. Young people were leaving, vowing to never return. Taxes were at historic highs and the City's finances were under a state-imposed control board to rein in our spending. While all of that was happening, the nation's economy was growing and ours was stagnant. The City's outlook was bleak.

Many felt that as a city, we had reached the boundary of our potential. But I knew there was so much more that we could achieve, and that together we could overcome our limitations. How often have outside circumstances tested the strength of our community only to be overcome by our perseverance? During my tenure, Buffalo has faced several economic crises, a global pandemic, social unrest, and the growing threat of climate change. Rather than be defeated by these challenges, we have emerged stronger and more resilient. Today, I'm outlining my Administration's plan to invest in our children's future, restructure, right size, and modernize our municipal government, while we focus on the social, economic, and housing needs of residents across our City. By taking this comprehensive and community-driven approach to meeting the demands of an ever-changing urban landscape, we will ensure our shared success and leave a legacy that future generations can build on. The state of our city is strong and I am convinced, now more than ever, we are ready to face the challenges ahead—together.

Our strategy to build a Buffalo without boundaries begins with investing in our youth, one of our city's most precious resources. Investing in our children will not be limited to spending on just one program or funding

one approach. We will support a series of interventions that focus on the whole spectrum of development from childhood to adult. This year's budget, in combination with resources from the American Rescue Plan, will enable us to continue funding the successful Learn to Earn program that provides young people enrolled in summer school the ability to earn while they are making up academic work. I'd like to thank President Biden, Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, and Congressman Higgins, who is here today for their leadership in securing this much needed boost for our city.

We are also increasing funding to the Mayor's Youth Employment Program, which will allow young people to access employment and training opportunities throughout the year instead of just the summer. By providing more mentoring and skills development to participants, we will better prepare them for good-paying jobs after they graduate from school.

This year's budget will also consolidate all of our youth programming under the Department of Community Services. This consolidation will enable the City to deliver more impactful youth services going forward.

Ensuring that our young people live in a safe, prosperous, and inclusive City will guarantee that the return on our investment in them is maximized. The gun violence across the City is unacceptable and requires immediate action to keep our communities safe. To bolster the Police Department's ability to respond to shootings more effectively, the City will increase the number of detectives, expand the Behavioral Health Team, and invest in technology solutions like shot spotter and updated communications systems. These investments will enable Buffalo police to respond more quickly when shootings occur, investigate cases more thoroughly, resolve them faster, and deter violence in our neighborhoods. As we roll out this technology, it will be done with sensitivity and regard for the rights of residents.

Improving our Police Department's ability to do their jobs must be matched with an equally strong investment in violence prevention. It begins with a partnership with our public schools. My Administration is working with Interim Superintendent Dr. Tonja Williams to develop a comprehensive school safety plan that will keep our children safe in school where they should be focused on learning. The Neal R. Dobbins Restorative Justice Fund, contained in the City's American Rescue Plan and named after the beloved community leader and founder of Most Valuable Parents or "MVP" who passed away during the pandemic, enables us to do just that. Community-based organizations will be able to apply for these funds to support their prevention, mentoring, violence interruption, and counseling services. The millions of dollars allocated across both the budget and the American Rescue Plan in employment, training and workforce development, paired with other youth program funding, will enable us to take a comprehensive approach to crime reduction.

The neighborhoods in which our children live are more than just houses, they must have healthy food, retail locations, barber and beauty shops, neighborhood banking options, and human service locations. They must have good roads, sidewalks and bike lanes. They should offer the residents who live in our neighborhoods good-paying jobs so they can buy a home, go back to school, or start a family.

To build strong neighborhoods, we must listen to residents and small businesses. Each neighborhood has different priorities and different needs. We want to be sure residents can easily access information they need while communicating the information we need to improve delivery of services. I'm investing \$1.5 million this year in a new, updated 311 call system. Our 311 call center has received national recognition and this investment will enhance communication by creating a state-of-the-art system with an easy-to-use interactive app for residents.

The Office of Strategic Planning's comprehensive process called "Envision Neighborhoods" also is focusing on the needs of residents and small businesses. Planners have been meeting with residents, gathering their input on the development they want to see occur in their neighborhoods. This will help drive my plan to continue improving our communities citywide.

To improve the overall efficiency of our Department of Public Works the City will need a new, state-of-the-art Public Works Campus. Today, my Administration issued an RFP for the purchase of a site to house all our public works operations, including a new animal shelter. This will improve the efficiency and delivery of various public works services. Moving our City's fleet of vehicles out of the Broadway Garage will also allow for additional development in the African American Heritage Corridor.

These investments in public works operations support our infrastructure citywide. Governor Hochul's announcement of \$54 million dollars to advance our Cars Sharing Main Street project, \$37 million for the Broadway Market, \$23 million dollars to transform Middle Main Street, and the allocation of \$18 million dollars to improve commercial corridors along Jefferson and Bailey Avenues on the East Side will help us achieve our development goals. My Administration has built our city's strength in part by working with others on our priorities. Thank you, Governor Hochul, for your partnership and support.

In addition to focusing on a new Public Works Campus, we will upgrade the vehicles that will be housed there. As our climate changes and extreme weather events become more frequent, we must invest in the equipment we need to keep our streets clear of snow so that people can travel to any place they need to go. My recommended budget will invest \$2.1 million this year to continue the modernization of our snow fighting fleet. This investment, in combination with our capital budget allocation, will allow the City to purchase needed new vehicles and a cutting edge GPS system to monitor their movement.

Adapting to our weather is only part of the equation in our response to global climate change. The City of Buffalo must also play a role in helping to mitigate it. As part of our City's restructuring, the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning is creating a new Climate Action Plan that will guide our inter-departmental efforts to reduce our carbon footprint and plan for how Buffalo will embrace a greener and more sustainable future.

One of these efforts will be the purchase of electric vehicles for the City's fleet and the installation of charging stations to support them. My Administration will look to our partners in state and federal government to help us leverage opportunities to fund green improvements across our City.

City government must also adapt by increasing our use of technology to make service delivery more efficient. This commitment will enable us to better communicate across departments and improve service delivery to enhance Buffalo's capability to compete for new residents, new investments, and new businesses. Next week, my administration will release a Broadband study focusing on keeping Buffalo competitive and making us a more digitally inclusive city. I want to recognize County Executive Mark Poloncarz for his strong focus on bringing broadband to our community.

Transformations in climate and technology require that we make sure the communities most vulnerable to being left behind—economically and socially—are included. As Buffalo changes we must strategically ensure that our policies and plans are inclusive, and beneficial to all residents who call our City home. This will be the work of my Administration's new Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

This new office will be led by the City's Chief Diversity Officer, a cabinet level appointee, and will consolidate the work of several functions, including contract compliance and the Office of New Americans into a single unit, reporting directly to the Mayor. This demonstrates the continued importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion to everything we do.

Today, my Office of Strategic Planning, in conjunction with the NFTA and its Executive Director Kim Minkel, is issuing an RFQ that will transform the LaSalle Metro Station's "park and ride" lot. Equitable transit-oriented development is a necessary component of inclusive economic development. The project—which will be similar to what we achieved at 201 Ellicott—will bring mixed income housing, jobs, and greater mobility to this area. This will enable hundreds of East Side residents to have more access to good-paying jobs at the Buffalo Niagara

Medical Campus and other employers located along the Main Street Knowledge Corridor.

We achieve our goals by strategically allocating the resources our community needs. My Recommended \$568 million dollar budget takes into account what we can control, as well as the outside factors we can't control, like staggering inflation, higher interest rates, and higher overall operating expenses. This budget uses \$52.5 million dollars of federal stimulus to off-set revenue losses caused by the drastic impacts of the pandemic. As we find innovative ways to generate revenue for the City, it is my goal to build on the financial stability we've enjoyed, to fortify our finances and protect us from the impact of external factors. One way we can do this is by expanding innovative public-private partnerships such as our successful collaborations with developers to invest in the public infrastructure around their projects, which have enabled the city to direct more investment into streets and sidewalks in our neighborhoods. The city can also build upon its history of working with organizations such as the Olmsted Parks Conservancy to secure private dollars for the Olmsted Parks system and more recently, the significant investment made by the Wilson Foundation, being used to transform LaSalle Park into Ralph Wilson Park.

My Administration has built a fiscally strong city and we can now reap the benefits of the choices we have made over the last sixteen years to attract more business development, outside investment, and new industries. We must turn to our own revenues to keep our momentum going and continue to provide high quality services. My proposed budget includes a 4.53% tax increase, which will generate over \$6.6 million dollars more in annual revenue which will help maintain the investments in people and infrastructure contained in this budget. I am also proposing modest increases to the garbage user fee and permit and license fees, which have not been increased in four years. Despite this increase, the City's tax rate will be \$10.38 per thousand dollars for residential and \$18.34 per thousand dollars for commercial properties, still less than half of the tax rate our city had when I took office in 2006 and still below the tax rates in surrounding municipalities and other upstate cities.

To build a Buffalo without boundaries will require the resources to maintain our current momentum while also giving us the ability to tackle the challenges the future will bring.

A Buffalo without boundaries is a city where people of all ages, nationalities, gender identities, sexual orientations, religions, and races can find an opportunity to be part of our community and succeed. It's a city that strives to aim higher, do better, and have faith in its ability to chart its own course in an ever-changing world. It's a city that both welcomes new neighbors and new ways of thinking and honors the legacy of our traditions and celebrations that make us a destination for tourists from around the world. It is a city where a child's health, educational opportunities, or chances for future success are not determined by the color of their skin.

Buffalo is no longer just a city on the move, it is a city with a direction and my 2022-23 Recommended Budget is the roadmap to get us there. Join me as we steer Buffalo toward an even brighter future. Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the great City of Buffalo.

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