



Ryan James
Councilmember

Helping People Get Ahead

I stepped into this role with a strong call to action: to increase affordability for our cost-burdened residents so they can not only survive; they can thrive. This past year Cincinnati has experienced a renaissance in population growth, and sustaining this expansion must happen hand in hand with the residents who make this city what it is. To do this, we have to foster a landscape where culture, safety, and success can be felt from the East Side to the West End. That work begins with creative solutions to improve the everyday realities facing our residents; and today, too many families are being asked to do too much with too little, making that goal hard to reach.

Across our city, the cost of housing continues to rise faster than income, leaving working families increasingly vulnerable to displacement and financial instability. Preventable evictions, aging homes in need of repair, and limited pathways to homeownership are placing long-term security out of reach for too many. Just as critically, many residents feel disconnected from one another and from the systems meant to serve them. A lack of shared community spaces, uneven investment across neighborhoods, and persistent trust gaps have contributed to a sense that growth is happening without broad inclusion. Longtime residents worry about being left behind or pushed out, while too many voices remain unheard in the decisions shaping their communities.

This budget proposal is grounded in a clear set of priorities: keeping families in their homes, expanding access to economic opportunities, and fostering a deeper sense of belonging across every neighborhood. By addressing these challenges with targeted, proactive investments, we can build a Cincinnati where stability, opportunity, and community are not privileges for some, but guaranteed.

Operating Budget Priorities

Public Safety and Prevention (Top Priority)

As we head into the summer months, we see predictable increases in public safety needs across our city. This budget must reflect that reality by ensuring we are fully prepared to respond, prevent, and protect our communities.

- Do not cut the budgets of police and fire services, and ensure they remain fully resourced to meet increased seasonal demand
- Invest in crime prevention strategies that address root causes and reduce violence before it happens
- Increase investment in police and fire compensation to remain competitive and keep pace with inflation
- Expand support for youth engagement and intervention programs
- Strengthen coordination between public safety and community-based partners

Affordability and Cost of Living Relief

- Establish a \$1 million Affordability Fund to reduce cost-of-living burdens and safeguard support funds for residents when they need them most
- Offset city-induced fees and fines, including parking tickets
- Address rising energy and household costs

Expanding Access Through D.O.O.R.S.

- Expand the Department of Opportunities and Resident Services (DOORS)
- Fund a Care Coordination Team to identify resident needs and connect residents to services
- Build toward a system where one call connects residents to help

Workforce Development and Economic Mobility

- Increase investment in workforce development programs
- Strengthen partnerships with Cincinnati Works, ArtWorks, and the Boys and Girls Club Workforce Development Center
- Expand access to training, job placement, and career pathways

Supporting Small Businesses, Entrepreneurs, and Regional Growth

- Invest in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, including Represent Cincy, African American Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, StartupCincy, and Cincy Tech
- Strengthen partnership with REDI Cincinnati to support job attraction and business growth
- Support catalytic events, including collaboration with the Cincinnati Sports Commission, Cincinnati Regional Chamber of Commerce, and Visit Cincy to drive tourism and economic activity
- Expand access to capital, technical assistance, and business support

Neighborhood and Community Activation

- Increase Neighborhood Support Funds from \$10,000 to \$12,000 annually
- Dedicate \$100,000 for neighborhood-based events
- Cap events at \$5,000 each and ensure access for neighborhood councils, churches, and small businesses
- Prioritize free, inclusive, and well-marketed community gatherings

Capital Budget Priorities

Long-term investments in infrastructure, facilities, and physical assets.

Public Safety Infrastructure

- Invest in modernizing fleet vehicles for police and fire to ensure reliable emergency response
- Invest in faster sidewalk repair and pothole filling

Affordable Housing and Strategic Growth

- Adequately fund the Department of Strategic Growth to accelerate affordable housing development
- Expand the economic development budget to support housing production, mixed-income development, and neighborhood revitalization
- Invest in projects that deliver long-term affordability and increase housing supply

Neighborhood and Community Infrastructure

- Invest in neighborhood business districts and local corridors
- Support development of more third spaces that foster connection and community without significant cost-barriers to entry
- Strengthen infrastructure that supports safe and connected neighborhoods