

City and County of Denver

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October 10, 2022

Mayor Michael B. Hancock
City and County of Denver
1437 Bannock St
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Mayor Hancock,

We would first like to extend our gratitude to you and the agencies that presented during the 17 budget hearings held the last week of September. These hearings go far in helping both the council and the public to understand the administration's goals, plans, and challenges. As always, the leaders of the various agencies were responsive to our concerns and questions, and we appreciated the candid discussions.

More importantly, these hearings help City Council members assess how — and to what degree — the administration's goals and plans match the council's budget priorities. In testing the proposed budget against our priorities, we are pleased most of the considerations we listed have been fulfilled either through your proposed budget or by action the council has already taken.

Nonetheless, we understand that studies are ongoing for two crucial considerations not in this proposed budget: an Office of Neighborhood Safety and an Office of Community Engagement. These two initiatives sprang from interactions with our respective constituents, and we believe they can significantly impact our city. We look forward to seeing the studies' conclusions.

After the hearings and further examination of the proposed budget, several proposals from council members surfaced. During our deliberation of those proposals, we once again tested them against our funding priorities. For review, those priorities are:

- Focus on improving community engagement and customer service to support residents navigating city services, resources, and accessibility, including language access.
- Increase affordable housing and support those experiencing homelessness throughout our city. Mitigate and reduce involuntary displacement of community members and businesses.
- Reframe safety in a public health, evidence-based, and anti-racist context with community investment to ensure healthy neighborhoods.

- Prioritize and support the recovery, resilience, and innovation of our workforce, local businesses, and community organizations.
- Protect our natural environment through policy and invest in communities to combat climate change.
- Increase complete multimodal transportation connections throughout the city.

In that light, we suggest these adjustments to the 2023 proposed budget as detailed below.

PROPOSALS RECEIVING THE SUPPORT OF A SUPER MAJORITY OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Department of Transportation and Infrastructure

Funding for one warranted stoplight in each council district — \$8,800,000

The federal Department of Transportation publishes criteria for determining if traffic signals are warranted. We understand that Denver has numerous intersections where lights are justified but not funded. We also understand from the Denver Department of Transportation and Infrastructure that one traffic signal can take up to three years to study, design, and install. Further, the department has indicated it can set 11 locations into the design phase in 2023. This funding would support the effort from design to build in the following years. **Funding source: Undesignated Fund Balance**

One Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) Pedestrian Crosswalk System for each council district — \$2,200,000

As with the traffic lights discussed above, the department maintains a list of numerous intersections where RRFB crosswalks are warranted but not funded. This expansion allows for the installation of one system in each council district to improve safety where the need has already been identified. **Funding Source: Undesignated Fund Balance**

Corridor Study for 38th Avenue between Inca Street and Sheridan Boulevard — \$500,000

This overdue study would create a vision for the entire corridor and define the elements most valued by the neighborhood. Redevelopment occurs without clear goals for treating the public realm along this high-injury network corridor. This funding will allow DOTI to study the mobility needs of the West 38th Ave. corridor, including pedestrian, transit, bicycle, and vehicle, and do so in a manner that addresses development opportunities, parking needs, and movement patterns along this important corridor. The study would also allow DOTI to identify the existing right-of-way constraints, as well as future right-of-way needs to fund improvements appropriately. **Funding source: Undesignated Fund Balance.**

Corridor Study for East Evans Avenue between Colorado Boulevard and Quebec Street — \$500,000

This study, too, is overdue and in critical need. Similar to the 38th Avenue study detailed above, this will allow the department to examine multiple issues, including land use and transportation, along this heavily-used corridor. **Funding source: Undesignated Fund Balance.**

Department of Safety

Data Coordination Software for 911 Dispatchers, First Responders, and Co-responders — \$400,000

There is currently no reliable way for 911 dispatchers, first responders, or co-responders to readily share safety and risk information that may have been gathered in previous calls or visits. Access to safety and risk information from prior calls to a location or home better positions all parties to assess the situation. This vital information, for example, might include whether a person has autism, dementia, or deafness. It could give a history of domestic abuse or substance misuse.

Knowing these details enables the city to better serve those in crisis and needing assistance. **Funding Source: Public Safety SRF - 911 Emergency Communications Trust Fund OR iFund.**

Denver Children's Advocacy Center — \$250,000

This facility plays a crucial role in forensic interviews of allegedly abused children. The facility, an accredited member of a network of Child Advocacy Centers, has worked in tandem with the Denver Police Department, the District Attorney, and the Denver Department of Human Services. In 2020, the center lost funding historically provided by a grant from the Department of Safety in favor of moving all forensic interviews to a DDHS facility. This restores funding to the center to ensure the safety of our city's vulnerable children, not just in the forensic interviews that gather evidence but also in the care and treatment that must inevitably follow such tragic events. **Funding Source: General Fund**

Office of Social Equity and Innovation

Participatory Budget Coordinator (Limited FTE for two years) — \$105,000

Participatory budget facilitators, mini-grants for community engagement, and other program implementation costs — \$250,000

Total: \$355,000

NOTE: While we suggest OSEI for this item, we are open to its assignment to another appropriate agency

The city currently carries a roll-over balance of \$1 million from prior appropriations intended for participatory budgeting but is not being disbursed through the current process. These existing funds would be sufficient to fund three neighborhood plan implementations of \$300-400k each as they are completed or adopted into 2023 and 2024 (West, Near Northwest, and Near Southeast). This adjustment would allow the successful use of existing capital dollars. **Funding Source: Undesignated Fund Balance.**

Move Budget Expansions for Equity Positions and Resources to the Office of Social Equity and Innovation — Budget Neutral

Three departments requested FTEs or resources to address equity. These expansions should be moved to OSEI. A consequence of city agencies branching out on their own too soon is they risk misalignment with the city's core work around equity. There is a real risk of reframing what the city prioritizes, defines, and delivers with no accountability to the Chief Equity Officer and their team. We believe the recent audit of OSEI favors this approach. The budget items are:

- Parks and Recreation: Equity Administrator — \$63,800
- Department of Safety: Equity Administrator — \$127,600
- Department of Human Services: Equity Services and Supplies — \$100,000
- Total: \$291,400

Funding Source: None. Moved from the three departments to OSEI.

Department of Housing Stability

Additional West Denver Renaissance Collaborative staff capacity to extend its ADU effort citywide — \$300,000

Council members have been actively rezoning several whole neighborhoods for ADUs. Currently, WDRC can serve West Denver neighborhoods. This adjustment allows for expanded staff capacity to enable more neighborhoods vulnerable to displacement to seek guidance and support in ADU construction. **Funding Source: Multiple departments previously funded this, and CPD was planning to stop funding its portion of \$50,000. At the mayor's discretion.**

Department of Parks and Recreation

Security cameras for recreation centers and parks — \$500,000

Our recreation centers and parks serve every resident, and they contribute to the health of our communities in a wide variety of ways. Therefore, safety is essential. While the department currently has some arrangements for security cameras and a plan, current resources are inadequate. This adjustment will go far in helping the department meet security goals and furthering the safety of residents. **Funding Source: Undesignated Fund Balance**

PROPOSALS RECEIVING THE SUPPORT OF A SIMPLE MAJORITY OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Denver Public Library

Modernization and deferred maintenance at Athmar Park, Barnum, Pauline Robinson, and Schlessman branches — \$4,000,000

Without question, libraries contribute to healthy communities on many levels. These branch libraries, found in some of our most disconnected neighborhoods, deserve investment. This funding will supplement the difference between what is needed to complete modernization and deferred maintenance. **Funding Source: Contingency Fund**

We know that creating and managing a \$3.75 billion budget for a city of Denver's size and complexity is a long and arduous task. We appreciate the efforts of the hundreds of employees who had both small and large roles in that process. Your thoughtful and thorough consideration of these proposals is also appreciated. As always, do not hesitate to reach out for answers to questions or clarifications we can provide.

Sincerely,



Jamie Torres
President



Amanda P. Sandoval
President Pro-Tempore

CC: Margaret Danuser, Chief Financial Officer

Stephanie Adams, Acting Deputy Chief Financial Officer/Budget and Management Director

Alan Salazar, Chief of Staff

Skye Stuart, Deputy Chief of Staff

Tracy J. Winchester, Deputy Chief of Staff/Chief Operations Officer