



## COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING  
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

**KENYAN R. McDUFFIE**  
Councilmember, Ward 5  
Chair Pro Tempore  
Chair, Committee on Business and  
Economic Development

**Committee Member**  
Transportation and the Environment  
Recreation, Libraries and Youth Affairs  
Housing and Executive Administration

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Muriel Bowser, Mayor  
Government of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20004

### ***Re: Ward 5 Priorities for Fiscal Year 2022***

Dear Mayor Bowser:

As you prepare to transmit the proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Budget and Financial Plan to the Council of the District of Columbia (“Council”), I would like to highlight a few priorities and request that you consider funding them in Fiscal Year 2022 on behalf of the residents of Ward 5.

My request is driven by two key concerns. First, this request addresses the immediate need to respond to the impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID 19) on our residents and economy. Second, this request addresses the urgent need to advance a racial equity agenda that dismantles the structural inequities that have long impacted our City’s success and strength of its residents.

While the District is faced with a \$462M shortfall over the four-year financial plan, the FY20 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) revealed a \$526M surplus along with opportunities to be more efficient and effective with our funding, while still addressing critical needs.

### **COVID 19 / Federal Relief Funding Priorities**

Since March 2020, the District has been under a public health emergency due to COVID 19. COVID 19 has caused the death of nearly 1,000 residents, forced scores of businesses to close, compelled thousands of residents to rely on unemployment benefits after the loss of their jobs, and dramatically changed the way we live. In sum, COVID has decimated aspects of our local economy, however the CAFR and recent revenue projections released from the OCFO also indicate that the economic impact has disproportionately impacted low-wage workers.

No other group in the District has borne the brunt of COVID’s impact more than the African-American community – as reflected in the disproportionate rates of infection, death, job loss, housing insecurity, and learning loss. The evidence is irrefutable. Therefore, I request that federal relief funds target the Black and brown communities that have been most affected.

Congress stands ready to make continued investments in recovery and make the District whole for previous underfunding. Accordingly, I ask that you prioritize the following initiatives when investing federal COVID relief funds, and supplement them, where appropriate, with local dollars:

1. Accessible priority vaccination of groups most impacted by the pandemic
2. Education and outreach campaigns that address vaccination hesitancy
3. Rent arrears assistance for tenants and small landlords
4. Utility arrears assistance to include phone and Internet service
5. Enhanced virtual and in-person mental health support for adults and school-aged youth
6. Workforce development (re)training for hospitality and retail employees
7. Targeted educational investments to address impacts of learning loss and the safe and equitable reopening of schools
8. Financial support for the impacted industries and their workers through business support grants and enhanced unemployment compensation
9. Replenish and shore up the Unemployment Insurance Fund to pre-COVID levels
10. Increase investment in hospitality sectors to promote the District as a destination, encourage safe tourism, and support and protect industry workers
11. Traffic ticket and other fine forgiveness, particularly fine doubling

### **Racial Equity and Community Investment**

The balance of my request focuses on strategies to advance a racial equity agenda. The growth of the District has been shaped by the structural inequities that plague our city and nation. The prosperity that has defined much of the District's economy over the past 10 years has not improved the lives of Black residents. Decades of structural and institutional racism in D.C., have created pervasive and widespread racial inequities across all indicators for success, including in health, education, employment, housing, transportation, business, and policing and the criminal justice system. The budget must create opportunities for wealth creation, address the ongoing displacement of longtime residents and businesses, and create opportunities for D.C. residents to sustain strong and safe communities.

We must move forward with new ideas that disrupt the institutions and practices that have reinforced inequity in our City. The following is a list, by category, of Ward 5 budget priorities and recommended funding with full details following.

• <b>Racial Wealth Gap</b>	<b>\$120.00M</b>
• <b>Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement</b>	<b>\$156.00M</b>
• <b>Legacy and Small Business Development</b>	<b>\$ 40.00M</b>
• <b>Transportation and Infrastructure</b>	<b>\$ 11.60M</b>
• <b>Public Safety and Community Investments</b>	<b>\$ 9.50M</b>
• <b>Library and Recreation</b>	<b>\$ 42.42M</b>
• <b>Environmental Justice</b>	<b>\$ 2.60M</b>
• <b>Arts and Culture</b>	<b>\$ 3.20M</b>

## ***I. Racial Wealth Gap (\$120M)***

The deep and persistent racial wealth gap will not close without bold, structural reform. The divide was created and maintained by public policies that have evolved over time including slavery, sharecropping, Jim Crow, red lining, mass incarceration, and predatory subprime lending. The racial wealth gap is greater today than it was nearly four decades ago and is widening.

Now, more than ever, the District must make key investments to eliminate the wealth gap between residents of color and their peers.

Accordingly, I ask that you:

1. Invest \$100M to study, develop and pilot a guaranteed income program for District households whose incomes fall below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. The Council of the District of Columbia studied various alternatives for universal basic income and minimum income in 2018 and UBI/guaranteed income pilots have had promising results around the country. Beginning the implementation of a rational and sustainable model to provide for a minimum income is a critical step towards ending the racial wealth gap in the District, and one that is being embraced across the nation<sup>1</sup>.
2. Invest \$20M to develop and implement a District-based Baby Bond initiative. There are approximately 9,500 children born annually in the District, and we know that roughly 20% of all children in D.C. live below the poverty line. A Baby Bonds program is a tangible investment in the future economic stability for our children. Every child born to households earning below 500% of the federal poverty would receive at least \$1,000 at birth and up to \$2,000 annually based on family income. Lower-income families will receive larger endowments. Funds would become available once the child turns 18 and may be used for education, business ownership, homeownership, or retirement. Similar proposals<sup>2</sup> note that the estimated account balance for a child from a very low-income family would be approximately \$50,000 by the time they reach age 18.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mayorsforagi.org>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/115/bills/s3766/BILLS-115s3766is.pdf>

## *II. Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement (\$156M)*

Investing in affordable housing remains central to building a more inclusive city. These investments must also ensure that Washingtonians are not displaced and are, instead, given opportunities to remain in the city. Additionally, we must protect seniors and long-term residents from displacement, recognizing their investments and contributions to the growth and stability of the District.

Accordingly, I ask that you:

1. Invest \$140M in the acquisition and conversion of the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel into a workforce, affordable, and permanent supportive housing site to support the goal of providing 12,000 affordable units in an equitable manner across the city by 2025.
2. Invest \$5M to establish a new down payment assistance program – that can be used in combination with the Home Purchase Assistance Program – that targets persons who graduated from a D.C. public high school or a vocational program such as the D.C. Infrastructure Academy. This will help to address the lack of ownership opportunities and continued displacement of long term District residents. It is critical that as residents gain skills, employment, and rise along the income ladder they continue to have attainable options to remain in the District.
3. Invest \$6M to eliminate property taxes for seniors age 70 and older who reside in a home they have owned for at least 20 years and whose adjusted gross income is less than \$60,000 annually and less than \$12,500 in household interest and dividend income. This measure passed in 2014<sup>3</sup> but remains unfunded.
4. Invest \$5M in additional funding to DHCD’s Safe and Healthy Homes Programs as follows:
  - a. \$2M to expand the Single-Family Residential Rehab Program to make basement waterproofing, mold remediation, and sump pump installation and/or repair eligible activities under this Program
  - b. \$3M to expand the Safe at Home Program to include additional home repairs, address code violations, and update HVAC and other systems along with other repairs to ensure that District seniors are able to age in place

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<sup>3</sup> Law L20-0105, Effective from May 28, 2014

### ***III. Legacy and Small Business Development (\$40M)***

Prior to COVID, tens of thousands of District residents were forced to leave the city due to gentrification and its attendant impact. Several local businesses including Cheers at the Big Chair, Bazaar Spices, among others closed as a result. Now, due to COVID, countless other small businesses are struggling to stay afloat.

Because the soul and success of our communities rely, in part, to thriving small businesses, I ask that you:

1. Invest \$20M in legacy businesses– long-term local businesses many of which are owned and operated by persons of color whereby:
  - a. \$2M would establish and fund a technical assistance, mentorship and incubator program for legacy businesses;
  - b. \$3M would help legacy businesses respond to the impacts of a changing retail environment and pivot to enhance both traditional brick and mortar services and online services; and
  - c. \$15M would assist legacy businesses purchase their physical establishments and to cover increases occupancy expenses.
2. Invest \$5M for the Equitable Impact Assistance Fund that I funded through last year’s Budget Support Act to support resident-owned, economically disadvantaged, and/or women-owned business enterprises as authorized under the law.
3. Invest \$10M in a new community development financial institution (CDFI) or minority depository institution (MDI) fund that will provide critical financing to District-based CDFIs and MDIs that provide small business lending to District-based enterprises. This new fund should support the institutions’ loan capital, equity, loan loss pool, and guarantee pool. CDFI/MDI’s are the most likely institutions to serve women and entrepreneurs of color; it is crucial that the District support access to capital for these new and growing businesses.
4. Invest \$5M to support a Streetscape Business Development Fund for small businesses to mitigate the myriad challenges posed by District sponsored long-term capital infrastructure projects.

#### ***IV. Transportation and Infrastructure (\$11.6M)***

Chief among the over 600 resident requests captured thus far in our Ward 5 budget survey was a greater investment in infrastructure to improve connectivity, pedestrian safety, and streetscaping.

Therefore, I ask that you:

1. Invest \$10M to conduct feasibility analysis, concept planning and initial capital expenses related to the construction of a deck over North Capitol Street from V Street to Seaton Place. The initiative will connect the Stronghold, Bloomingdale, Eckington, and other nearby neighborhoods currently divided by a highway and provide a much-needed pedestrian and bike-friendly greenway.
2. Invest \$500,000 funds to establish and support a dedicated, rapid bus line along New York Avenue from the NoMa-Gallaudet University Metrorail station to the Shops at Dakota Crossing with stops in Union Market, Ivy City, Arboretum and Fort Lincoln neighborhoods.
3. Invest \$500,000 in streetscape and beautification enhancements in the Lamond-Riggs community, particularly at Riggs Road and South Dakota Avenue and along South Dakota Avenue from Galloway Street to Michigan Avenue.
4. Invest \$500,000 in beautification enhancements to the Bertie Backus campus such as landscaping, exterior maintenance, and the installation of a community mural.
5. Invest \$100,000 in streetscape and traffic safety improvements along 17th St NE from Benning Rd to Bladensburg Rd Langston and Carver communities.

#### ***V. Public Safety and Community Engagement (\$9.5M)***

1. Expand Investments Required Under the NEAR Act

I am pleased that the District has continued to move forward in its implementation of the NEAR Act. The issues this legislation addresses are longstanding and so we must remain steadfast in the application of its principals.

I request an additional \$4M funds to increase and augment the DC Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement's violence interruption and Pathways programs.

Specifically, I ask that you:

- a. Create two additional Pathways cohorts with 25 participants per cohort.
- b. Add four violence-interruption sites and place one each in the following Ward 5 communities: Taft/Woodridge; Lamond-Riggs (this location has a shared

border between Wards 4 and 5); Edgewood; and LeDroit/Bloomingdale (this location has a shared border between Ward 1 and 5).

- c. Provide two violence interrupters at each site, which will increase the number of violence interrupters by 12 staffers.

1. Reform Policing and Invest in Community-based Programs

The death and abuse of Black and brown citizens at the hands of the police came to a head this past year and raised the community's consciousness regarding the need to reform our police system by investing more in community-based programs.

I request the creation of a \$5M grant which targets community-based programs that provide mentoring, conflict resolution, mental health and workforce readiness training to residents of Ward 5. Grantees, including youth organizations, must be based in Wards 5 or have at least two years of proven experience working in the Ward.

The Ward 5 public safety priorities outlined in this letter are by no means meant to exclude implementation of similar programs in other wards where appropriate. As you are well aware, conflict crosses ward boundaries and violence interruption requires place-based resources to address ongoing issues. In fact, I would urge you to identify resources to implement similar initiatives in every community where the conditions warrant such investments.

2. Investments in Dedicated Community Response Team (CRT)

I request \$500,000 funds for the creation of a dedicated CRT team to address persistent challenges in the Trinidad, Langston, Carver and Ivy City neighborhoods resulting from challenges with addiction, mental health, trauma and related concerns. As we continue to move towards a public health approach to public safety it is crucial that there are continued investments in strategies that can both improve community outcomes and reduce reliance on traditional public safety approaches. The CRT's have the ability to build community, engage residents and respond to incidents that involve a behavioral health intervention without the involvement of MPD.

## ***VI. Library and Recreation (\$42.42M)***

Ward 5 residents desire and need significant investments in clean, safe, and modern library and recreation space. To that end, I ask that you:

1. Earmark \$20M for the development of a new library in the Edgewood/Eckington/Stronghold community due to the "service gap" DCPL identified in its November 2020 Master Facilities Plan.
2. Provide \$20M for a new community and recreational center in Ivy City.
3. Invest \$1.72M in the Ward 5 Roving Leaders Program whereby:

- a. \$1.5M would fund 20 additional full-time staff positions (grades 7 and 9) and
  - b. \$220,000 would restore the program's non-personnel budget which was reduced to \$56,000.
4. Invest \$200,000 to support senior events including en blanc, painting, bingo, customer care, and other programming as part of DPR's Senior Division in its Ward 5 facilities. As we move through the COVID recovery, it will be critical that we find virtual and ultimately in-person opportunities for often isolated seniors to connect and remain active and engaged with their community.
  5. Provide \$500,000 to support improvements to the Edgewood Triangle Park that sits at the intersection of Lincoln, Franklin, and 4th Street NE. This site comprises 52,000 square feet of DPR-owned space. I request that the monies fund lighting improvements, commemorative works, a dog park, recreational amenities, and better accessibility measures.
  6. Prioritize planned investments at the Arboretum Recreational facility to address capital needs including lighting, new splash pad and other capital improvements.

***VII. Environmental Justice (\$2.6M)***

Ward 5 continues to house the overwhelming majority of the city's industrial sites. Efforts to close long-term trash transfer stations have helped, yet there is more to be done. Improved air quality is paramount as Ward 5 residents continue to have high rates of asthma and complain of paint particles and fumes from industrial sites located near their homes. Additionally, I am focused on ensuring Ward 5 residents have the ability to enjoy their community without trash, rodents and other unsanitary conditions that impact public health.

Accordingly, I ask that you:

1. Invest \$200,000 to support on-demand air quality testing in Ward 5.
  - a. The addition of 1 FTE at the District Department of Energy & Environment who will, on demand, visit and conduct air quality assessments at or near paint shops, trash transfer facilities, asphalt plants, and other industrial sites located in Ward 5.
  - b. The provision of required air quality assessment equipment, at a cost of approximately \$100,000, to successfully conduct on-demand air quality tests.
2. Invest \$1.6M evenly across all nine Ward 5 Clean Teams based in and along North Capitol Street, Upper Bladensburg, Lower Bladensburg, New York Avenue, Rhode Island Avenue, Fort Lincoln, Trinidad, Ivy City, and Riggs/South Dakota.
3. Invest \$500,000 to establish and support a Ward 5 Roving Clean Team comprised of 10 full-time employees.



4. Invest \$300,000 to establish and support an Eckington Clean Team whose boundaries shall include Lincoln Road, R Street, Harry Thomas Way, New York Avenue, and Eckington Place.

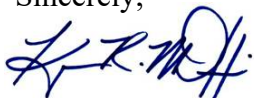
***VIII. Arts and Culture (\$3.2M)***

Investment in the arts fosters both community and economic development by providing opportunities to enhance equitable economic growth and increased workforce opportunities. Last year, I pushed the District to significantly invest in arts communities that had not traditionally received government support. For example, I secured \$3M in the FY21 Budget to establish a Go-Go music archive and support for a local Go-Go creative economy.

1. I ask that the District further its initial investment and designate an additional \$3M to support our local Go-Go. Specifically, I ask that you:
  - a. Provide \$1M in additional COVID relief funds to Go-Go music artist and industry workers.
  - b. Invest \$1M to sponsor performance opportunities for Go-Go artists through District government media outlets such as the Office of Cable Television Music Film and Entertainment.
  - c. Earmark \$750,000 for business development grants to support capacity building among Go-Go enterprises for expenses to include administrative support, operating expenses, website development, merchandising, app/website development, and other technical assistance.
  - d. Invest \$250,000 to support youth and young adult programming that helps to launch new Go-Go bands, produce Go-Go music, and sponsor live performances.
2. In addition, I request that you fund \$200,000 to invest in arts and music programming for youth and adults to support local working artists and to provide programming for children and adults through DPR and Ward 5 based nonprofit entities.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the budget requests and appreciate your thoughtful consideration of each of them. Feel free to contact me or my Committee Director, Alicia DiFazio, at [adifazio@dccouncil.us](mailto:adifazio@dccouncil.us) with any questions.

Sincerely,



Kenyan R. McDuffie