

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508, 402-441-7500

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MEDIA CONTACT: Jon Taylor, City Communications, 402-441-7547

Mayor's Budget Cultivates Lincoln Residents' Quality of Life *Proposed plan includes increased investments in water, streets, and parks*

Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird's proposed City budget for the 2024-2026 fiscal years builds on the robust foundation of effective service delivery established by the City over the past five years, while providing important new investments to deliver the highest quality of life for residents.

"The proposed 2024-2026 biennial budget continues to deliver exceptional City services while further enhancing the quality of life for all in Lincoln," Mayor Gaylor Baird said. "Our budget makes sound, strategic investments designed to grow new economic opportunities, advance our goal of making Lincoln the safest and healthiest capital city, and support strong neighborhoods and an even more dynamic downtown for residents and visitors."

The tax-funded budget investment for year one of the biennial budget is \$282,396,723 and the tax-funded budget investment for year two is \$293,232,747. The property tax rate remains at the current level of 0.29533 per \$100 of valuation.

In highlighting Lincoln's already solid reputation as one of the best-run cities in America, Mayor Gaylor Baird identified the following key investments in the proposed budget, designed to cultivate a:

- **Strong and Resilient City:** The budget includes a \$215 million investment in infrastructure, engineering, land acquisition and more for the Water 2.0 project to secure Lincoln's second source of water. It increases transportation funding by nearly \$3 million in the first year to \$49.9 million for improvements including street repair, rehabilitation, and new construction that support hundreds of millions of dollars in private investments and developments across the city.
- **Safe and Healthy City:** The budget funds police and fire contracts that include pay raises for first responders, supporting the recruitment and retention of top talent and resulting in a high level of public safety and emergency response for Lincoln residents. The budget includes 18 new firefighters and firefighter paramedics funded by a federal SAFER grant and one grant-funded Lincoln Police community resource specialist to enhance gang prevention programs.
- **Economically and Culturally Vibrant City:** Significant investments in the new South Haymarket Park will support a high quality of life for downtown residents, attract outside visitors to Lincoln, and serve as an economic development

catalyst. The budget also provides increased funding for parks and playground improvements across the community.

- **Equitable and Inclusive City:** Affordable housing is prioritized by continuing \$710,000 in funding to support quality affordable housing. This budget also continues the City's successful rental rehabilitation initiative that supports high-quality affordable housing, with over 200 additional units expected to be improved over the two-year period.
- **Innovative and Operationally Excellent City:** The budget includes funds to upgrade information technology systems to enhance cybersecurity, while also investing in software and hardware upgrades within the City fleet services to analyze and promote greater fuel savings.

(An Executive Summary with more specific budget proposals follows this release.)

Mayor Gaylor Baird said the two-year budget demonstrates how the City will continue to build upon its successes and work toward an even brighter future for Lincoln residents, even under current fiscal constraints that include caps on expenditure growth, decreases in state funding for StarTran, and increased costs. Mayor Gaylor Baird cited the City's utilization of federal funds for important investments in new infrastructure like Water 2.0 and lead service line replacement as ways in which the City is wisely securing and deploying additional resources.

Mayor Gaylor Baird outlined what drives \$21 million in additional investment in year one of the biennial budget including:

- Public Safety
 - Lincoln Fire and Rescue contract – \$3.5 million including benefits
 - Police and Fire Pension increased contribution – \$2.6 million
- City personnel salary and benefits (excluding LFR) to continue current service levels the community desires – \$5.2 million
- City Personnel 2.77 FTE new funding
- Star Tran lost revenue and increased costs – \$2.09 million
 - State funding cut by \$656,744; UNL removed a route and reduced their funding \$237,376; Increased fuel costs – \$1.2 million
- Heavy Vehicle Equipment bundled purchase – \$4.3 million
 - Additional funds budgeted in year one to order vehicles earlier that have long lead times for delivery (fire apparatus, snow trucks, pothole spray patchers, forestry section boom trucks, and others)
- Inflation (materials, rents, utilities, fuel costs, and more) – \$3 million

“The City of Lincoln works within fiscal constraints to deliver on our commitment to ongoing community priorities, while also undertaking ambitious proposals like those to secure our city's future water supply and increase investments in infrastructure,” Mayor Gaylor Baird said. “Through these investments, we will continue to grow the

great life for all in Lincoln.”

Mayor Gaylor Baird said this budget also enhances a strong commitment to customer service in partnership with community members, organizations, and businesses.

“The strong public-private partnership approach in Lincoln is resulting in record-setting business and development activity and strong economic growth,” said Mayor Gaylor Baird. “The resources from that growth are being reinvested in infrastructure and services that fuel our economy and help make Lincoln the quality-of-life capital of the country.”

The City Council's public hearing on the budget is Monday, August 5, and the Council is scheduled to adopt the budget August 26. For more information on the budget, visit lincoln.ne.gov/budget. For more information on the Capital Improvement Program, visit lincoln.ne.gov/CIP.

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Executive Summary

The mayor’s proposed budget for 2024-26 makes the following strategic investments to advance important community objectives:

Safe and Healthy City

- Funds police and fire contracts that include pay raises for first responders, supporting the recruitment and retention of top talent and resulting in a high level of public safety and emergency response for Lincoln residents
- Replaces Lincoln Fire and Rescue training tower to keep team performance at high levels and continue to meet industry standards and requirements, along with system improvements and additional apparatus to enhance operations, improve response times, and improve health and safety of firefighters
- Incorporates 18 new firefighter and firefighter/paramedic FTEs through the support of a federal SAFER grant
- Proposes improvements to aging fire station facilities and a new northwest police team station to support emergency response for Lincoln's growing population
- Increases police and fire pension funding to honor our commitments to retired first responders
- Adds one grant-funded Lincoln Police community resource specialist to enhance our gang prevention programs

- Continues \$166,000 funding for mental health services through partnerships, training, peer support programs, and crisis response. This improves the response by providers to police referrals for mental health services. Funding also supports the co-responder program that will put mental health professionals on scene with police officers.
- Includes funding for programs that protect and promote public health including medical and dental care, food safety, animal control, and environmental health
- Continues investments in alternative intersections such as roundabouts to enhance transportation safety and economic opportunity for the community
- Continues implementation of school zone standards to keep students safe
- Grows safety education efforts at various community events
- Provides upgrades and replacements for more than 400 traffic signals, 4,700 signs, 2,450 posts, 525 miles of long line pavement markings and 4,000 symbols and crosswalks to protect the safety of the traveling public
- Provides an additional housing inspector to help support safe and healthy housing and strong neighborhoods

Economically and Culturally Vibrant City

- Invests significantly in the new South Haymarket Park, which will continue to support high quality of life for downtown residents, attract outside visitors to Lincoln, and serve as an economic development catalyst
- Renovates seven public playgrounds and continues funding for public pool maintenance and repairs
- Invests in Commercial Districts and the Downtown Corridors project to showcase Lincoln's dynamic downtown and help drive tourism
- Provides funding for targeted activation of public spaces, increasing their vitality and usage by both Lincoln residents and visitors
- Continues the City's commitment to economic vitality and growth through contributions to the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development and a focus on business recruitment and retention, workforce development, and entrepreneurship support
- Continues to administer Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act services through the American Job Center, which offers job search and job training opportunities for adults, dislocated workers, and youth

- Continues a Ticket to Work program to grow Lincoln's workforce by connecting residents with disabilities to job opportunities
- Continues to fund library programming, including One Book One Lincoln, the annual Summer Reading Challenge, STEM-based learning, and arts and cultural offerings

Strong and Resilient City

- Invests \$49.9 million in year one and \$37.5 million in year two for transportation improvements including street repair, rehabilitation, and new construction that support hundreds of millions of dollars in private investment and development across the city
- Transportation funding includes \$1.57 million general revenue funding in each budget year to repair and improve sidewalks across the community
- Urban Development funding includes \$807,750 for downtown area improvements like additional sidewalk repairs, streetscape improvements, landscape and irrigation enhancements, bike lanes and other projects that support economic development and a thriving downtown.
- Invests \$215 million on infrastructure, engineering, land acquisition and more for the Water 2.0 project to secure Lincoln's second source of water
- In addition to the Water 2.0 project, provides \$47.2 million water capital investment in year one and \$45.3 million in year two, which includes expansion of the system for new growth and repairs and replacement of existing infrastructure
- Increases annual water main replacement in existing neighborhoods from seven miles to eight miles.
- Implements additional three miles of new water main extensions and construction each year to support new homes and businesses.
- Invests in 10 additional team members to support City growth and the Lincoln water system's reliability. This includes an additional Utility Engineering Technician to expedite the efficient review of new development plans
- Supports City growth with an additional Lincoln Water System satellite facility, serving as a hub for faster, more efficient water system construction and services

- Incorporates \$33.8 million funding for wastewater capital improvements in year one and \$38.9 million in year two for system improvements, including additional capacity at the Theresa Street treatment plant to support a growing community
- Operational investments in wastewater including two additional plant operators to support expanded operations
- Invests in our solid waste management and recycling systems to protect community health and safety and support continued City growth, including a \$10 million liner and leachate expansion to the Bluff Road Solid Waste Management Facility
- Ensures continued service levels for StarTran public transit without raising rates. Increased funding is required partly due to decreases in state funding and increased fuel costs
- Provides funding for buses, maintenance, and security systems to provide consistent, safe, and convenient services.
- Provides local resources in partnership with a federal grant to build a new Multi-Modal Transit Center to support economic opportunity, increased efficiency of StarTran system, and advances our climate action goals
- Continues housing and neighborhood revitalization programs, including the City's heat pump incentive program and Rental Rehabilitation initiative, with ongoing focus on energy savings and greenhouse gas reduction
- Continues investments in bike lanes, street markings, and trails for safe and healthy travel
- Includes nearly \$600,000 for street tree maintenance and planting to lessen risk from damaged trees, assist with stormwater management, and reduce greenhouse gases. This is up from \$90,000 budgeted in 2020
- Invests \$366,000 in year one and \$377,000 in year two toward the treatment, removal, and recovery of City trees impacted by the Emerald Ash Borer

Equitable and Inclusive City

- Prioritizes affordable housing by continuing \$710,000 in funding added by the City Council in the previous biennium to remove barriers to constructing quality affordable housing
- Continues successful rental rehabilitation program to support high-quality affordable rental housing, with over 200 additional units expected to be improved over the two-year period

- Continues Aging Partners' service delivery to our growing senior population, including the new Victory Park center that is increasing participation and expanding services. The new center has increased usage by almost 300% compared to the previous downtown center
- Invests in our Joint Budget Committee partnership with Lancaster County to support local nonprofit agencies, which provide food, shelter, and health services for families and residents in need. Funding is increased by 3% plus an additional allocation of \$100,000 for early childhood education
- Ensures all library branches continue their existing hours of operation and service, with access to digital resources for learning available 24/7
- Provides 75 new StarTran bus stop improvements including additional shelters, benches, signage and ADA ramps
- Invests in Parks system to improve access and recreational opportunities for all residents across the community, including construction of three new neighborhood parks and installation of three miles of new trails
- Funding for recreation center school age programs and Community Learning Centers that enable parents to work while their children learn and play
- Supports the incorporation of inclusive play equipment to increase playground access for a wider range of residents and families
- Continued support to attract and retain a diverse workforce for the City of Lincoln to capture the widest range of skills and talents in service to the community

Innovative and Operationally Excellent City

- Upgrades to City of Lincoln's information technology systems to enhance cybersecurity
- Provides an additional Network Administrator/Security Operations Analyst to protect City information systems, services, and data
- Funds safety and security upgrades at library facilities, including a replacement fire alarm system and building security control
- Invests in software and hardware upgrades within City fleet services to analyze and promote greater fuel savings
- Funding within Building and Safety for improved electronic plan submittal and plan review system and increased customer support

- Continues the transition to all digital processes within the Planning Department that has improved customer service, accuracy, and review times
- Continued improvements to City parking system that supports economic development, downtown events, and tourism
- Ensure competitive salaries and employee support/recognition programs to attract and retain talent, which contributes to the overall health, growth and success of the City team in service to the community
- Provides an additional part time Law Clerk and additional resources to help ensure fast and accurate legal services to City departments, including building and development, code and policy revision and review, and criminal justice work