



CITY OF PITTSBURGH
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
MAYOR ED GAINEY
He/Him/His

Mayor Ed Gainey's 2023 State of the City Address

Good morning, thank you Council President Kail-Smith, Finance Chair Lavelle, and the entire City Council for your time and dedication to serving our great City.

In particular, I would like to take this opportunity, as they prepare for their last budget season, to thank Councilman Kraus and Councilman Burgess for their years of leadership and service.

I also welcome Councilmen-elect Charland and Mosely, who are here with us today. I look forward to working and serving with you come January.

One year ago, I stood here and shared with you my assessment of the state of the City of Pittsburgh. I voiced that the state of our City was strong and that I was confident in our ability not just to succeed, but to lead the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States in confronting the challenges coming out of a pandemic.

I pledged that we would commit to restoring core city services after years of disinvestment due to the Act 47 Era. This means more swimming pools open, more potholes filled, and better snowplowing.

That we would become a learning organization committed to solving problems to their root cause through the leadership and wisdom of our residents and our frontline workforce.

And that we would make tough decisions rather than play politics - that we would serve rather than cater.

I committed that we would use this approach to governing to achieve 3 lofty goals:

That Pittsburgh would become the **safest** city in America,

That we would become the most **welcoming** city in America,

And that we would become a city where everyone who calls Pittsburgh home could **thrive**.

This year we launched the City in the Streets initiative in order to bring government to neighborhoods that have not had the opportunity to speak to their leaders for far too long.

We heard from thousands of our residents about what is most important to them and what keeps them up at night. Today, I am proud to put forward a budget with no tax increases, no cuts to staffing or services, and that responds to those needs and dreams.

And I come before you to say that our city is even stronger than it was a year ago, that we have made important progress on the path to our goals, and that our future is brighter than ever.

Our work and this budget are about our youth and their future, all that we do today will be to help improve your ability to thrive not just today, but every day.

These young leaders are working with our departments across the city to learn about their local government, and how to work towards a future career right here in city hall.

Thanks to our partnerships with YES, CCAC, and Partner4Work, these kids are receiving college credit, and a stipend, for participating in this innovative new program.

You are the future leaders of our great city, and everything we are doing today, you will carry forward for future generations.

Creating opportunities for our young people into the future means that we invest in protecting our city-owned infrastructure, especially our bridges.

The Department of Mobility and Infrastructure has been able to increase staffing to better manage our bridge inventory, and I'm proud to say that after a year-long comprehensive assessment of our needs, we have proposed 4 new bridge Maintenance staffers and a 300 percent increase in spending on bridge maintenance and repairs compared to the previous 4 years.

LET ME SAY THAT AGAIN.

We have proposed a 300 percent increase in spending on bridge maintenance and repairs compared to the previous 4 years.

This year we have seen too many of our residents lose their lives in traffic-related accidents.

All these deaths are preventable – and this is why we are committing to a vision of zero traffic-related fatalities so that we can have all the tools we need to keep our residents safe.

I'm proud of the work that our DOMI team does to keep everyone safe, no matter if they walk, roll, or drive.

Traffic calming is our residents' most requested service. We're shifting resources to support additional speed bumps, lane reductions, two-way conversions, and other measures to make our streets safe for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians alike.

This budget represents an unprecedented 136% increase in traffic calming funding, and we're adding two new positions to help manage these critical projects.

Again, let me emphasize,

This represents an unprecedented 136% increase in traffic calming funding.

Improvements in the right of way are not only important investments in safety; they are also opportunities to connect communities that have historically been isolated from amenities and opportunity.

With the award of a competitive RAISE grant, we'll be investing 14 million dollars in the Hill District neighborhood over the next few years to improve and sustain main streets and to restore vital connections for residents to transit and downtown.

And because I believe we should always go first – this project, through a unique partnership with the White House, will be the first of many where we apply new tools that make sure that when we build things, our residents can prosper and thrive.

When we listen to our communities, we are able to do big things that help entire neighborhoods to prosper. Thanks to a partnership with the Manchester Citizens

Corporation led by LaShawn Burton-Falk, we were able to secure a Reconnecting Communities planning grant that will allow us to understand how best to restore connectivity to Manchester and provide pathways for residents and businesses to both the riverfront and the life of our city.

None of these achievements would be possible without the hard work of Director Lucas, Acting Director Jeff Skalican, and the entire DOMI staff.

Thank you.

When I say that I want Pittsburgh to be the safest city in America, to me this also means caring for the safety of our city workforce.

Over the past year, the Department of Public Works has built out a Real-Time Safety System with a goal of eliminating all safety-related incidents for our Public Works workforce; we have also established a goal of expanding this system to all City Departments by the end of 2023.

Since implementing this new system, DPW has seen a 55% reduction in work-related injuries since August of 2022.

This means fewer workers out due to injury and better-staffed crews to serve our residents.

It helps make sure that we are fulfilling our pledge to restore core city services, with crews available to pick up the garbage, fill the potholes, clean vacant lots, and plow the snow.

Our DPW crews worked to provide clean and safe restrooms in our parks in a new pilot program. This plan resulted in the re-opening of over 30 permanent park restrooms across the City during normal park hours.

Our Public Works crews are on the front lines to combat litter and blight throughout our city.

This year they have completed 86 Clean and Liens on privately owned lots – an increase from only 5 the year before.

Our anti-litter teams are on the front lines of illegal dumping enforcement, taking in over 2100 complaints this year alone.

In 2024, we will include funding to continue our resident sidewalk pilot program, which for the first time is allowing city government to partner with residents to improve the walkability of our critical corridors, with a particular focus on the routes our children walk on their way to school.

We will also add 15 positions to our Bureau of Environmental Services to ensure that our garbage trucks have the staffing levels they need to meet resident needs for service while preventing worker injuries, and we will increase investment in our city facilities.

DPW staff are doing all of this while working to eliminate barriers and diversify their workforce.

Last year more women and minorities were hired into critical leadership positions than ever before.

Our city is cleaner, safer, and more welcoming due to the hard work of every single one of our dedicated DPW employees and their leader Director Hornstein. Thank you.

In the past year, we have seen a remarkable transformation in our Department of Public Safety.

We've made our emergency service bureaus faster, smarter, more capable, and more accountable.

We've expanded our capacity to respond to social, behavioral, and mental health emergencies with compassion and care,

Installed leaders with the knowledge, vision, and energy to carry our city forward,

And we've opened new chapters of cooperation and collaboration with the unions representing our public safety officers.

For the first time in over 20 years, we signed a contract with The Fraternal Order of Police through a voluntary agreement, rather than through arbitration.

This contract contains historic investments in rank-and-file salaries to aid in recruitment and retention, and for the first time establishes a disciplinary matrix that makes clear the conduct we expect of those responsible for keeping us safe.

This contract will also help us build a police bureau that reflects our community and our values.

We're also increasing investment in new forms of community violence interruption. Our REACH team has now grown to thirty men and women who work with people exposed to the disease of violence to prevent harm before it happens.

In addition, this year, we made one million dollars in direct investment into community organizations that have proven their effectiveness in addressing harm and trauma and we intend to double that in 2024.

If we are going to be successful in having zero homicides in our city, we must do all that we can to ensure those who take a life in our city are brought to justice.

Our Major Crimes Unit has worked tirelessly to bring justice to families who have had their relatives' lives taken from them.

While we are seeing a year-over-year reduction in homicides, one life lost to violence is one too many.

This year Major Crimes cleared over 80% of homicides committed in our communities; their work contributes to peace, hope, and healing for the people of our city, and I'm proud of their accomplishments.

I ask everyone to join me in thanking our officers, our REACH teams, and our community organizations for their outstanding work across our city.

Moving forward, we will continue our work to implement the Plan for Peace, our public health approach to public safety, that meets the needs of, and can earn the trust of, all in our communities, and exemplifies the values of care, guardianship, and service that are at the heart of public safety.

Through strategic investments and reorganization in our Office of Community Health and Safety, we are now living up to the promise it held when it was launched.

The Co-Response program, launched in earnest this year, has seen success in ensuring that the right responders are available to meet the needs of those who are experiencing mental health crises: Joint teams of social workers and dedicated officers are dispatched to assist our residents in crisis and are connecting them to the resources they need.

In just one 3-week window earlier this year this team successfully prevented 3 suicides, reversed dozens of overdoses, and reunited a number of our unhoused residents with their families.

Co-responders work closely with our ROOTS outreach team, which in 2024 will expand to serve our entire city. Together they play a vital role in our work to make Downtown and all of our neighborhoods safe and welcoming for everyone.

They worked hand in hand with our partners at the Allegheny County Department of Human Services to address the most complex challenges affecting our people. This collaboration brings to the table all the necessary agencies needed to share solutions and better serve our residents.

In 2024, we will continue to build upon these successes across our public safety services with increased investments, new initiatives, and improved systems. We will add new vehicles to ensure that the Fire, EMS, and Police Fleets are adequately prepared to respond to critical incidents and begin the process of civilianizing our Police Bureau through the addition of 12 Community Service Aids.

These aids will help make sure that our officers have the time to focus on building stronger relationships in our community.

These new investments build upon our work over the past year and will bring us closer to our vision of making Pittsburgh the safest City in America.

None of this work would be possible without the visionary leadership of our Public Safety Director Lee Schmidt, or that of our extraordinary Bureau Chiefs, EMS Chief Amera Gilchrist, Fire Chief Darryl Jones, and Police Chief Larry Sciotto as well as a special shoutout to Reverend Glenn Grayson and Antwan Bailey from our REACH teams. Thank you.

I also want to thank our downtown partners. Jeremy Waldrup at the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, John Valentine with Downtown Neighbors Alliance, and Stephanie Pashman and Lauren Connelly at the Allegheny Conference. Your commitment to a safe, welcoming, and thriving Downtown is appreciated. Thank you.

Our Recreation Centers are vital community assets, offering enjoyment and enrichment to youth and families across our city. By providing safe places for our kids to learn, play, and grow, they are also a key piece of our violence prevention work.

Our Rec Centers are being transformed – and over the coming years, you can expect more investments into these vibrant community centers in our city.

This year we were able to expand hours at Ammon Rec Center and Phillips Rec Center, which resulted in over 2000 visitors from July to September.

Kids were able to get meals and engage in safe activities, and soon families will be able to connect with social workers and other resources all in one place.

Last summer we were able to provide nearly 90,000 meals to kids, and over 20,000 meals to seniors in our Healthy Active Living Centers.

This summer we were also able to open the largest number of pools since before the pandemic, with over 125,000 residents taking advantage of the 15 out of 18 pools this season.

Parks staff connect families across our city to healthy and fresh fruits and vegetables at revitalized farmers markets and have worked with City Council and the Food Policy Council to create a 3-million-dollar Food Justice Fund.

In 2024, we will continue to make improvements to our Farmers' Markets by adding a full-time manager and investing in the City Farms program to improve access for all of our residents to healthy, fresh, and locally grown produce.

This is what it means to serve the people, and I'm thankful for the leadership of Director Vargas and the entire Citiparks team.

As our city grows and changes, we must improve and adapt our systems to ensure the safety of our built environment.

Our dedicated team at PLI is working hard to improve inspection and permitting services for our residents. They have expanded the accelerated review process for mechanical and electrical permits – helping local businesses move through the permitting process faster than ever before while freeing up reviewer time to review homeowner permits.

These accelerated reviews, along with pre-application review meetings, mean less red tape for everyone who needs a permit for their home repair project or their major development.

This year PLI has re-evaluated over 1,600 condemned properties, getting through a years-long backlog.

In 2024, we will continue to build on this progress by improving language access support in the One-Stop PGH platform, adding additional positions to support code enforcement, inspection, and application review, and re-opening our in-person permitting counter, which has been closed since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

This new and state-of-the-art facility at 412 Boulevard of the Allies, will be the place where continued investments in technology will meet a renewed commitment to customer service that will make the permitting process simpler and faster than ever before.

Thank you to this team, and to Acting Director David Green for leading these innovative ways to make the city work better for our residents.

One of the major initiatives that we have undertaken since coming into office was focusing on removing silos and working to create better and more efficient interdepartmental cooperation.

An example of this is the work our Departments of City Planning, Permits Licenses, and Inspections, and Mobility and Infrastructure are doing to modernize and streamline the City's online permit application portal.

Soon, we will be unveiling a new online interface that will incorporate modern website design and increased functionality on tablets and phones.

Working with this Council, City Planning has established new zoning code provisions to reduce costs and time for HVAC replacements, as well as the recently proposed code revisions that will reduce barriers that create undue burdens for small childcare businesses.

While so much of our work focuses on the issues immediately in front of us, Planning is the department that is working toward the Pittsburgh of tomorrow.

One fantastic example is a city-led consortium to purchase renewable wind energy, which will soon provide 40% of energy consumption in city facilities.

And through putting federal dollars to work to repair communities that have been separated by poor urban plans of the past.

Their focus on sustainability, renewal, and a dedication to ensuring that the Pittsburgh of 20 years from now is one in which every Pittsburgher can thrive lies at the core of their work on our Comprehensive Plan, which will begin in earnest soon.

This work is essential to establishing a clear vision for the future of our city while accounting for the injustices of our past.

These two objectives will be united through a Comprehensive Plan that takes as its foundation a Just Transition approach to creating economic, social, and environmental justice and equity in our City.

In addition to launching the Comprehensive Plan, in 2024 we will be adding additional positions to City Planning's Zoning and Development Review team to expedite planning reviews.

This will allow us to protect public interests, encourage positive economic development, and ensure a more efficient review process for all city property owners.

Director Abrams and her team have done incredible work to make sure that Pittsburgh continues to be resilient well into the future.

When I ran for office, I pledged that I would do the work necessary to make sure that everyone pays their fair share.

This year, our Law and Finance Departments moved forward to challenge the tax-exempt status of 26 properties that didn't pass the test of being a purely public charity.

These challenges are already beginning to result in property owners paying property taxes, and we won't stop until everyone who should be is paying their fair share to our great city.

Thank you, City Solicitor Krycia Kubiak, Finance Director Jen Gula, and everyone in their offices for their work in holding property owners accountable to the Pennsylvania constitution.

Moving properties onto our tax rolls also means responsibly stewarding our vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties.

This year our Finance Department has completed public sales of 96 city-owned properties, with an additional 101 sales pending.

This is nearly twice as many as in 2022.

And thanks to the action this Council took to amend the cooperation agreement between the City, the URA, and the Pittsburgh Land Bank, we are in a better position than ever to finally leverage this tool to reduce blight in our communities and more effectively facilitate neighborhood-scale development.

As evidence of this, just last month the URA conveyed 17 properties to the Land Bank that will be used for community gardens, urban agriculture, and affordable housing. We look forward to working with this Council and the other taxing bodies to further unlock the potential of the Land Bank and deliver on its promise.

Our Finance Department is the engine that keeps all our city services running, and our city could not function without them. Please join me in thanking Director Gula and her team for reducing backlogs for real estate taxes and building more robust systems to keep our city moving.

Our city also couldn't function without the dedicated team in Innovation and Performance. I&P is more than just computers and software. They are the team that keeps critical city functions operating and creates transparency in local government through the analysis and sharing of government information.

They are helping lead our transformation into a learning culture and have been critical in our success in implementing the new DPW real-time safety system.

They help local startups solve problems our departments face through the PGH Lab. For the first time in the program's history, we will create a first-customer program to better support these companies and deepen the city's commitment to civic innovation.

In 2024, I&P will continue to lead efforts to create a more modern and accessible city government by investing in necessary data functions, including cyber-security, establishing uninterruptible power supplies to secure continual public safety functions

during power outages, and modernizing public works and public safety telecommunications.

I am especially proud of the work our city is doing in the area of digital equity. Alongside the County, we are anchoring a remarkable alliance of government, universities, public schools, and non-profits that are acting together to bring affordable and fast digital access to every resident. The Pittsburgh Digital Equity Coalition has created a strategic plan to bring broadband devices and training to ensure a vibrant future for our region and its inhabitants.

Thank you to Director Norman and the team for your continued collaboration and innovation that makes our city work.

Over the past year, we have been focused on opening doors and removing barriers to careers here at City Hall.

Our dedicated Human Resources Team has been a key strategic partner in finding ways to bring opportunities to residents to good jobs here in Pittsburgh.

In partnership with Pittsburgh Public Schools and Pathways to Prosperity, we have made a historic investment in paid internships and co-ops for young people, to train them in good-paying union jobs in the skilled trades.

From eliminating driver's license requirements for crossing guards to changing how our Police recruits earn their credits, HR has been leading to help make every job more accessible.

Thank you to Education Coordinator Alexis Walker, and Director Paula Kellerman and her team for helping put more Pittsburghers to work.

And a special thank you to carpentry foreman Jon Niedbala for going above and beyond to ensure that this program is successful for all of our youth.

We are here today because of the hard work of our Office of Management and Budget. Can I ask Deputy Mayor Jake Pawlak, Chief Operating and Administrative Officer Lisa Frank, Chief Economic Development Officer Kyle Chintalapalli, Chief Financial Officer Patrick Cornell, and the Operating and Capital teams to stand up?

Thank you for doing the hard work of translating my vision for our city into budgets that invest in our priorities and lift up our values.

OMB also includes the Grants Team, which this year has led work to secure over 33 million dollars in grant funding for projects for our parks, reconnecting our communities, violence intervention, and fixing our city roads and bridges.

It also includes our Procurement team, which, working together with the Office of Business Diversity, has also begun to reimagine how we do procurement of contracts in our city.

Our city has created a new Pre-Bid meeting process, with better and more dedicated outreach.

This work is already seeing success. Before this new policy, the City had an average of 5 contractors attend pre-bid meetings, and now over 20 companies are there to learn more and be a part of our procurement process.

We have also worked to break up large contracts to provide more opportunities for our local businesses to get city work.

This includes the construction work on Homewood Field, which has a minority prime contractor, and 16 MWDBE sub-contractors.

These innovative processes have meant increased opportunities for our local MWDBE companies, and as a result, we have seen sub-contracts for our large primes to MWDBE companies more than double.

Thank you to Deputy Chief of Staff Felicity Williams, Chief Procurement Officer Jen Olzinger, and Business Diversity Manager Chuck Durham, and their teams, for your work in expanding opportunities for our diverse businesses.

Building strategic partnerships allows us to find ways to create a brighter future for our kids.

This summer, through our Office of Financial Empowerment, our Learn and Earn Summer Youth program helped 125 young people open their first checking accounts. Thanks to our partners at Dollar Bank who collaborated with us to open non-custodial accounts, contributing 50 dollars to each child to help them on their way.

Thanks to Jason Jones and Dollar Bank, Financial Empowerment Manager Sharon Watkins, for helping to build lasting partnerships for kids and families in our city.

Pittsburgh is a national leader in workforce development, and I'm honored that our great city was named one of just 5 Workforce Hubs by President Biden.

Just last week we had over 47 local labor unions, businesses, foundations, non-profits, and elected officials sign onto our Pittsburgh Good Jobs Principles, our roadmap to ensuring that everyone who calls Pittsburgh home can have a good, family-sustaining job.

This new program will allow us to track and measure our success, while we create over 1,000 good jobs right here in our City.

Thank you to Workforce and Youth Manager, Rick Williams, our Union Partners Darrin Kelly and Steve Mazza, and Partner4Work for your contributions to these efforts.

Last year my office undertook a reorganization of government to make it work better for you.

We transitioned the 311 response line into the Office of Neighborhood Services to best serve the people.

Through this work, our team has been able to implement new system improvements that have increased our productivity in resolving service requests by 300 percent.

This dedicated team launched a door-to-door canvassing program to better inform residents about projects happening in their neighborhoods.

This year they have knocked on over 10,000 doors to help residents know about projects, meetings, and events happening in their neighborhoods.

They embody the spirit of bringing government to the people, and this year we launched our City in the Streets initiative where thousands of residents were able to meet directly and conveniently with city officials to learn about how to get a job, public safety, housing, permits, and services to support themselves and their families.

Thank you to Neighborhood Services Senior Manager, Rebekkah Ranallo, and the entire Neighborhood Services team for helping bring the government to the people.

The City of Pittsburgh for years has had numerous policies in place meant to protect civil rights and workers' rights – but never had a team in place to do the work to put those policies into practice.

Earlier this year my administration launched the Office of Equal Protection, under the leadership of Zeke Rediker. This team works to protect our residents with disabilities, ensure our workers have access to their paid sick leave rights, and are on the front lines of our work to end gun violence in our city.

Making Pittsburgh welcome for everyone includes those who are relocating to Pittsburgh as refugees and immigrants.

This year our Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs has worked hard to provide language access to make Grant Street inclusive and welcoming.

Staff and residents joined hands to create our first-ever International Day Parade, where over 30 nationalities came together in peace and unity to celebrate the diversity that makes our city great.

We want to thank our Acting Manager, Michelle King, and want to acknowledge the work that Feyi Akintola, has done to make Pittsburgh more welcoming for everyone who calls Pittsburgh home.

Having a place to call home. Nothing is more vital to our ability to feel safe and welcome in our communities or critical for us to thrive. That is why I am so thankful to this Council for working with us to increase resources for affordable housing and proud of the work our team is doing with the URA to close on the first affordable housing bond in Pittsburgh's history.

These new resources will further supplement those the URA receives from the Housing Opportunity Fund, other city funding, and Federal recovery funds to better respond to the housing crisis our residents face.

However, even before we receive the bond proceeds, the URA has invested 11.3 million dollars to preserve and create 408 affordable housing units over the first three quarters of this year. Over that same period, they've also been able to support 89 new homeowners and assist 200 renters to stay in their homes. All these borrowers are low-to moderate-income and over 81% identify as women or minorities.

Our partners at the URA and the Housing Authority are also committed to bringing new federal and state resources to bear for investment in our neighborhoods. You can see this in the 6 low-income housing tax credit awards, more than we have ever received before, or the recently announced 15 million dollars in PHFA Housing Options Grant awards.

Not to mention the 50-million-dollar Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant award for Bedford Dwellings in the Hill District.

Small, local businesses are critical to the fabric of our neighborhoods and represent a path to financial independence for so many. To support that dream and invest in our communities, the URA has invested 5.82 million dollars in 70 small businesses over the first nine months of this year. And of those businesses, 77% are minority- or women-owned firms.

Thank you to Executive Director Susheela Nemani-Stanger and everyone at the URA for your partnership with us on expanding affordable housing and increasing opportunities for businesses to thrive.

Our recent successes, ongoing initiatives, and plans for the coming year make me more confident than ever in the potential of our City. But that future is not without its challenges.

While the state of our finances remains strong, volatility in the national economy, lingering debts from the Act 47 era, and the expiration of Federal pandemic support at the end of 2024 will require us to be especially frugal, particularly in our capital spending, until the end of 2026, when the retirement of significant legacy debt will dramatically improve our financial position.

My administration has chosen to turn this challenge into an opportunity and retool our capital plan to focus on project delivery over the next 3 years.

We have dozens of important capital projects underway, already financed, and in most cases, months if not years behind schedule.

This backlog grew over the past decade as the very real urgency of reinvesting in our facilities and infrastructure ran into the weak state of our project delivery capabilities after years of cuts and deferred investment in our staff and systems.

Next year we'll embark on a focused sprint on completing the projects we have underway before adding additional projects to our capital plan.

This is why I have decided to propose a capital budget that does not include any brand-new projects in 2024 but instead focuses on filling funding gaps in existing projects to put them on a path to successful and more timely completion.

While we must be more thoughtful in our capital spending, we also must tackle the most urgent priorities in our infrastructure to meet our commitment to the safety of our residents and our workforce.

That is why I am proud, even in constrained circumstances, to propose the increases in bridge maintenance and traffic calming that I mentioned earlier.

Our neighborhoods have waited too long for these vital, bread & butter investments, and I am committed to delivering them.

Keeping our residents informed about the work of our administration, in an open, honest, and transparent fashion, is key to building trust with communities that have never seen themselves reflected in city hall.

Thank you to my hardworking Communications Staff, directed by Maria Montañó, for your work on informing our community.

The state of our city is strong, our future is bright, and our potential is limitless.

I am honored and humbled to have the opportunity to serve the citizens of Pittsburgh as Mayor. And though the path may not be straight, and the going may be difficult, I believe with every fiber of my being that we will reach new heights.

I look forward to another year of the challenging but necessary and rewarding work of leading our city through tough times, but always toward a more just, humane, and prosperous tomorrow.

That new day can only come through collaboration, partnership, and common purpose.

I thank you all for joining me in this journey.

Let's go get it.

