

FY 2016–2017 DRAFT BUDGET MESSAGE – Mayor Byron W. Brown

As delivered Friday, April 29, 2016

Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here with my colleagues, the Members of the Common Council. Council President Pridgen, Majority Leader Rivera, President Pro Tem Scanlon and Councilmembers Golombek, Wingo and Feroletto, as well as our Comptroller Mark Schroeder – thank you all for your service to our City.

I am also joined by some special guests: Alphonso O'Neil-White, the Chairman of the *Racial Equity Round Table*; Acea Mosey, the Co-Chair of *Beverly Gray Business Incubator Steering Committee*; David Rust, the Executive Director of *Say Yes Buffalo*; Pastor James Giles from the *Peacemakers*; and from the *Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy* -- Chairman Kevin Kelly, Chairman-Elect Dennis Horrigan, and Stephanie Crockatt, the Executive Director -- who have embraced leadership roles in some of the key initiatives that I will highlight in my presentation this afternoon. I am grateful that you were able to be here today.

Finally, I would like to recognize the leaders of my Finance Team: Commissioner of Administration and Finance Donna Estrich, Senior Management Analyst Raymour Nosworthy, the members of my Fiscal SubCabinet and all of my Commissioners, Department Heads and Directors, whose hard work and expertise contribute to the successful operation of our City every day.

Today, I am here before you once again, to present a balanced, responsible, Recommended Budget for the City of Buffalo. In Fiscal Year 2016-2017, we will continue to build on the strong economic foundation we have carefully constructed over the past decade, furthering my mission of reclaiming our place among the great cities of the United States. I am confident that this financial document is a solid blueprint for ensuring that a renewed optimism and a real opportunity for prosperity reaches every city resident. Additionally, I have devoted significant resources toward modernizing the delivery of City services, to make government more responsive, efficient and accessible for all of our residents.

Earlier this year I delivered my tenth State of the City address, which illustrated the real aspects of the economic renaissance that we have worked hard to achieve over the past decade. The substantial brick and mortar investments... the job growth... the hottest construction market in the Northeast... the competitive real estate market – things that took many years to accomplish. And recently, Buffalo was ranked Number #1 by the Huffington Post on the *international* list of the Top 10 “Comeback Cities”!

I'm very proud of these facts. These all directly result in investor confidence, which improves our bond ratings

and our credit ratings and contributes to the willingness of our State and Federal partners to provide us with additional support and resources. It also enhances our ability to develop a budget and a spending plan that continues to promote economic development and investment in our city.

My recommended Budget for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 totals approximately **\$494 million**.

(\$493,940,908 dollars, to be exact).

This represents a slight increase of **\$729,885 dollars** – significantly **less than 1%**.

We did tap in to our fund balance, but carefully remained within the parameters of our four year plan at **\$10 million**, leaving an unassigned fund balance of **\$33 million**.

In addition to our fund balance, our ‘Rainy Day’ Fund holds reserves of **\$37 million**.

AND, we anticipate closing our books on Fiscal Year 2015-16 with a **\$4 million** dollar budget surplus.

After applying the State Tax Formula and staying below the cap, my pledge to hold the line on property taxes stands, as our property tax and PILOT revenue will remain consistent with last year at \$142.8 million.

Since 2006, my administration has cut commercial property tax rates by almost 32% and residential property tax rates by nearly 16%.

Additionally, in concert with the City’s Capital Budget program, we will continue to assist in the long-term financing of vital infrastructure projects Citywide, including: Genesee Gateway, Bailey Avenue Bridge Replacement and LaSalle Park Roadway Improvements.

To sustain and facilitate our growth, my commitment to modernizing the use of City data to further engage all of our residents, make government more efficient and improve the quality of lives is an important component of my budget proposal. We will use fact-based and data driven approaches to strategically make decisions and adopt even more best practices.

We will improve the availability and quality of data for consumption. Knowledge will become a more readily available tool for residents and community stakeholders because we will be able to provide more information,

increase assistance, and, by prioritizing, releasing and maintaining our data publicly, be a more efficient, open and transparent government.

My proposal also includes **\$500,000** in funding to equip every on-duty police officer with an iPad, making the Buffalo Police Department **the first** major police department in the nation to provide this technology to every officer. The Buffalo Police Department, under the leadership of Commissioner Dan Derenda, has worked with experts to create a unique computer-aided dispatch and reporting function on the iPad. This will also provide GPS mapping capabilities for responding to calls. Among the many new features, our officers will be able to use the cameras to take crime scene photos and digitally insert them into police reports.

In an effort to further streamline and improve Buffalo's licensing and permitting operations, I have committed \$275,000 for the purchase of new digital technology to expedite the plan review process.

And, as Buffalo residents continue to recycle more, I have allocated \$125,000 to support a new recycling incentive program, expanding our "34andMore Buffalo Recycles" campaign, and providing further savings to the City by reducing the cost of waste disposal.

The best aspect of achieving efficiency is that it enables us to create even greater opportunity.

I have allocated \$500,000 to fund the operation of the Beverly Gray Business Exchange Center, a comprehensive small business resource center, developed to support entrepreneurship and innovation for M/WBE and small businesses. This center will connect small business owners to business opportunities and provide an array of services to assist with their growth in an effort to create more job opportunities for our residents.

There is also an allocation of \$75,000 to enhance and review our contracts for M/WBE compliance across City agencies and departments. This dedicated funding stream will ensure that existing agreements are being enforced and that future agreements maximize our potential for inclusion.

As we continue to build our City of opportunity, my spending plan reaffirms a continued commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. I have provided The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo with \$50,000 in funding to support the work of the Racial Equity Roundtable -- a group of civic leaders who represent the public, private, faith-based, and nonprofit sectors -- dedicated to realizing a more equitable Buffalo. I have also included funding to create a minority engineer/architect training program, and increased resources for the Office of New Americans.

The greatest source of my pride remains the spirit of our people and our communities of Good Neighbors.

In this budget, I have continued funding for our vibrant Cultural and Antiviolence organizations through our grants program. And, in continuing to focus on building strong community-police relations, which has yielded a 32% drop in the crime rate since 2006, with last year coming in at the 'lowest crime rate' in the city's recorded history, I have included funding to hire the next generation of police officers, which will also achieve savings as retirements from the police force continue to increase.

* As a reminder, if you or someone you know is interested in a career in law enforcement, we encourage City residents to register for the June 18th police exam. Applications must be submitted by May 13th. Please go to the City's website for more information about the exam.

I have also increased funding for the Peacemakers Gang Intervention Program to \$150,000, an increase of \$25,000, and have dedicated resources for enhancing security here at City Hall, at the recommendation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. More than 1,600 people go to work at City Hall every day, and we receive more than 125,000 visitors annually at this beautiful, iconic building.

Protecting our residents also requires that we maintain a City where all of our children and grandchildren are educated, healthy and provided with opportunity.

We will continue to make significant investments in *Say Yes*, by honoring the third installment of our four-year pledge of \$200,000, by providing \$75,000 for the purchase of tablets for graduating *Say Yes Scholars*, as well as \$40,000 in financial incentives to 'Buffalo Senior Citizen Volunteers' who tutor students in partnership with *Buffalo Public Schools*, *Say Yes* and *Read to Succeed*.

Additionally, I have allocated \$60,000 for students and families who have good attendance records, and for those who demonstrate the greatest improvements in overall attendance. I also increased funding to create an additional 100 Youth Employment and Internship opportunities, bringing the total number to 1,500.

And, in an effort to educate residents about how to ensure that their homes are free of hazardous substances, I will fund a *Lead Education Awareness Program* through revisions to the City of Buffalo Rental Registration Ordinance. My plan will increase the Rental Registration Fee to \$20 for a single-unit rental and \$40 dollars for a double-unit rental.

A portion of the revenue raised through this increase will support this important public awareness campaign. In the City of Buffalo, where we have so many older homes, long-term exposure to lead continues to be a serious health issue, particularly in our young people. I will release more details about this plan next week.

My budget proposal will also continue to fund our popular organizations, programs and initiatives, including the *Police Athletic League of Buffalo*, *Reading Rules*, and my *Annual Summer BBQ for City Seniors*.

Finally, building on our world-class, quality of life amenities and events, and the \$52 million capital investment in parks Citywide since I became Mayor, we're going to continue to invest in our City's natural assets and community activities. My plan adds six additional 'seasonal' laborers to our Division of Parks and Recreation workforce to help keep our City parks beautiful, clean and safe.

Additionally, my spending plan further strengthens our unique public/private partnership with The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, continuing to provide high quality management of our historic parks. As one of the top ten best urban parks in the world and one of the 'Great Places in America', this inter-connected network of parks and parkways, the first of its kind in the nation, adds to Buffalo's growing reputation as a world-class destination.

As per the terms of the current management agreement, the City will increase our annual commitment to the Conservancy by \$100,000, bringing the annual base payment to \$1.1 million. We will increase the fundraising match by \$100,000, where the City provides \$1 for every \$2 raised by Olmsted. The new cap will be set at \$300,000 from the City, if the Conservancy raises \$600,000. Our partnership with the Olmsted Conservancy will also include additional assistance with insurance related costs. I have also provided funding for a Market Manager at the legendary Broadway Market and funding for more than 30 Clean Sweeps Citywide.

I am also proposing a new Special Events policy. Due to the increase and record number of participants at popular events across the City, including the Slow Rolls, 5K Races, Juneteenth and the Italian Festival, the 4th of July Fireworks at the Waterfront, and so many others, we will help offset the additional costs for keeping events safe, clean and fun. I have asked Council Members to cap the number of fee waivers at a total of \$1,500 per Council Member, and have been meeting with organizers of events to share costs for the services associated with these events. The additional revenue from these initiatives will total approximately \$250,000, and will be allocated to our Community Centers to offset their gas and electric costs, enabling all City-owned Community Centers to continue to provide our youth and seniors with valuable programming.

This is a responsible budget, with a sound spending plan focused on strategic new investments that will make the City of Buffalo even more competitive for business growth and more attractive for residential investment.

I look forward to working with the Common Council as you review the details of the Proposed Budget, and continuing to partner with you, and all of our residents to build an even stronger, safer and more prosperous City of Buffalo.

The Council must return the Budget to the Mayor by May 22, 2016. The Mayor may then veto only additions made by the Council. By Charter, the Budget becomes official by June 8th