



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING**  
**1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE NW**  
**WASHINGTON, DC 20004**

**JANESE LEWIS GEORGE**  
Ward 4 Councilmember  
Chair of the Committee on  
Facilities and Family Services

**COMMITTEE MEMBER**  
Committee on Transportation and the Environment  
Committee on Executive Administration and Labor  
Committee on Public Works and Operations

February 14, 2022

The Honorable Muriel Bowser  
Mayor of the District of Columbia  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my priorities for the Fiscal Year 2024 budget for Ward 4 and the District of Columbia.

My priorities for the FY24 budget have been informed by conversations with Ward 4 community members through my Community Access, Resource & Engagement (CARE) days, Listen As We Climb events, Ward 4 facility readiness tours, and senior office hour initiatives; through engagement with and resolutions from Advisory Neighborhood Commissions; and through ongoing feedback from direct service providers and community advocates who are partners in year-round oversight of our city's investments. Ward 4 residents care deeply about budgets and policies that systemically advance racial and economic equity in the District, yet **quality of life issues - safety and basic city services – continue to be the most frequent and pressing concerns I hear about.** My budget requests for FY24 are centered around these three core themes; investing in city services and infrastructure, building safer and stronger communities, and becoming a more equitable District. I look forward to working with you to invest in our communities and improve city services to respond to the challenges of the moment.

## **Investing in City Services and Infrastructure**

- 1. Increase pay and hiring incentives for professionals in direct service, human care, and behavioral health roles.** Across all sectors – government, non-profit, for-profit – these professions are suffering a staffing crises that strains the quality and availability of essential human services. Without a skilled workforce, our city cannot care for older adults, support individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities, provide case management for residents experiencing homelessness, serve the needs of survivors of domestic violence and victims of crime, or counsel those struggling with behavioral health and mental wellness – especially District students. Years of low pay for these jobs had led to burnout, turnover, and an inability

to recruit and retain new talent. To address the workforce shortage and remediate structural sexism and racism inherent in under-compensating a workforce traditionally dominated by women and people of color, we must take three crucial steps in FY24:

- Fund and implement the **Direct Support Professional Payment Rate Act of 2019** (Law 23-77) to set a wage of \$24/hour for all workers who aid those who struggle with care for themselves and/or living independently. A \$24 minimum wage should be the standard minimum pay rate for any home-health aid or related direct support job funded by the city – whether funded through Medicaid, contracts for human care agreements, or organizational grants. This is a top priority of the disability services and senior community and I look forward to working with you to achieve this funding as a part of my committee’s priorities this session.
- Fully fund and implement the vision of the **Nonprofit Fair Compensation Act of 2020** (L23-185) to increase nonprofit contract and grant funding by 10% annually to cover their indirect service costs. Status quo funding levels have exacerbated the financial precarity of non-profits in the District and limited their hiring and retention capacities. A 10% increase, at a minimum, is urgently needed to improve the city’s ability to meet increased needs in case management to end homelessness, crime victim recovery services, and behavioral health counseling.
- Raise salaries and establish hiring incentives for direct service jobs held by District government workers, including school counselors, behavioral health outreach workers, case managers, and health aides. We currently offer \$20,000 signing bonuses to new police officers; those bonuses must be matched for our recruits in behavioral health and case management positions, where we have critical vacancies.

**2. \$8.4 million to implement the Greener Government Buildings Amendment Act.** Accelerating the city’s timeline for net-zero compliance in all District government building projects is a necessary investment in our city’s climate goals and public health. The Department of General Services will require additional staffing to make this happen and facilities currently in the Capital Improvement Plan pipeline will need additional funds for sustainable construction materials and technologies. As the new Chair of the Committee on Facilities and Family Services, I look forward to partnering with you to deliver on this recently passed law.

**3. Hire additional Department of Public Works liaisons to exclusively serve each Ward.** It is clear from the volume of constituent service requests my office receives each week that DPW requires additional capacity (leaf collection specialists, leaf blowers, parking enforcers, SWEEP inspectors, etc.), including at least two public engagement specialist and community liaisons who can coordinate with Council offices and ANC commissioners to solve constituent challenges with city services, maintenance, and parking enforcement. This agency needs to be both more proactive and more responsive. Dedicated Ward liaisons could help deliver quicker results for District residents.

**4. Reinstall public litter cans wrongly removed by DPW and expand clean-city efforts.** Every day my office hears about overflowing litter cans on our public streets, missed home pick-ups, and inadequate waste storage and collections at crowded apartment buildings. We

have a trash problem – and one that exacerbates our rodent and public safety problems. Two steps must be taken in the FY24 budget, if not sooner:

- **Install more public litter cans**, including replacing all cans DPW removed without notice last year. As we increase the number of waste receptacles throughout the city, we should adopt public waste/recycling/compost models of other green cities, install cans with “smart” sensors that can notify collectors when pick up is needed, and ensure all new cans are designed to protect against overflowing with rain and rodent intrusions.
- **Hire more SWEEP inspectors and fund new clean teams.** Overflowing dumpsters from apartments and businesses, like litter on our streets, are a health, safety, and sanitation hazard. [The CLEAN Collections](#) and [Notice of Intent to Remove Public Litter Container](#) bills I introduced last session would help to legislatively address these issues yet attentive staffing tasked with proactive enforcement and cleaning responsibilities are needed to make these policy proposals real. DPW should connect District residents to year-round, salaried positions that can help enforce our waste management laws, maintain roads and alleys, and keep our city clean for everyone.

5. **Restore programming at Fort Stevens, Lamond, and Petworth Recreation Centers.** Over the past year DPR operating hours and programs were cut at several Ward 4 recreation centers, limiting social and recreational opportunities for our seniors and positive, healthy recreation outlets for our youth. Due to staffing challenges, experienced rec center staff were moved from sites where they have strong community ties. DPR must fund additional positions in FY24, offer competitive hiring incentives, and more actively promote the agency’s job openings so it can fully restore hours and programming.
6. **\$1 million to train and hire additional OSSE Department of Transportation staff.** Transportation for students with disabilities is a critical service but there have been too many instances in recent years of service disruption and endangerment of children due to limited, underqualified, and unresponsive staffing. Funds to improve trainings and adequately staff this service are necessary to improve safety and reliability for families with special needs.
7. **\$50,000 to improve senior transit options in Ward 4 by expanding DC Neighborhood Connect.** The seniors and veterans at Abrams Hall and Karin House, located at the far southwestern end of the Walter Reed campus, continue to require transportation assistance to run their errands, attend community events, and get to and from major transit hubs. The Department of For-Hire Vehicles’ DC Neighborhood Connect Program could solve this service gap by expanding the current Ward 4 service area two blocks west to 16th Street and by reinstating free rides for addresses originating from or ending at the Walter Reed Campus.
8. **\$1.5 million to acquire a new, larger facility to house the work of the Ethiopian Community Center in Ward 4.** DC’s Ethiopian community requires assistance locating and affording space to establish a community center that can provide supportive services to our sizable population of Ethiopian immigrants and their decedents living in Ward 4. The [Ethiopian Community Center](#) has specifically named a need for a larger location to facilitate community cultural events, spiritual gatherings, child care programming, housing navigation services, translation and educational offerings, and culinary and nutritional services. Please

establish a grant through the Mayor’s Office of Community Affairs that can enable the Ethiopian Community Center to purchase a permanent facility (one-time) and host regular programming to uplift the community (ongoing grant support is likely to be needed).

- 9. Invest an additional \$100 million in each year of the Capital Improvement Plan to accelerate public housing repairs.** The recent Federal audit confirmed the magnitude of issues with DCHA buildings and management and we must immediately act on tangible improvements in the lives of public housing residents. Adding \$100 million to expand and accelerate renovations – renovations that honor a build-first model and enable residents to move in more quickly to currently unoccupied units in the repair pipeline – is the minimum we should be investing in improvements to this critical affordable housing stock. After years of frustrating delays, we cannot allow our residents living in public housing to continue to suffer conditions that undermine their physical and emotional health.
  
- 10. Increase DCPS, DDOT, and DPR small capital project budgets to fix long-standing issues and add new major infrastructure projects in Ward 4 to the Capital Improvement Plan.** The District has a maintenance backlog totaling hundreds, if not thousands, of persistently broken or ill-repaired pieces of equipment and building systems. The FY24 capital budget must include more funding for non-modernization projects like ADA compliance, athletic fields, HVAC replacement, and safety systems. Faulty design choices or poor upkeep like at Roosevelt High School, should not be allowed to fester amidst “band aid” solutions. **Please see Appendix A (page 9) listing specific capital investments and repairs needs in Ward 4.**

## **Building Safer, Stronger Communities**

Over the past year, Ward 4 residents have faced daily threats of gun violence, out-of-control traffic, overdoses, and behavioral health crises. While some of the challenges we are seeing are an unfortunate outgrowth of the havoc of the COVID-19 pandemic, other challenges reflect years of underinvestment in social determinants of health and community wellbeing. I hope my proposals can help us right-size strategic investments to address immediate safety needs and to disrupt cycles of harm that leave our residents vulnerable to becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence.

- 1. Set aside at least \$25 million in the Capital Improvement Plan to acquire property at the intersection of 5<sup>th</sup> and Kennedy Streets, NW.** This corner has long struggled with violence and drug deals; it is in urgent need of revitalization and public services to uplift the Brightwood Park community and meet larger needs in Ward 4. Specifically, I look forward to working with you to execute and fund an eminent domain purchase in order to build:
  - A new **public library** to fill the service gap in [Brightwood/Manor Park](#); a Kennedy Street library should be a separate investment from what is currently budgeted as “a new 4A library” to address upgrades needed for the existing Juanita E. Thornton/Shepherd Park Neighborhood Library.
  - A new **job training and employment resource center** to replace the soon-to-close American Job Center at the UDC Bertie Backus Campus in Fort Totten; a resource

center at Kennedy and 5<sup>th</sup> would be prepared to host annual Pathways cohorts organized by the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement.

- **Affordable housing;** this would be an ideal location to pilot social housing as envisioned in my Green New Deal for Housing Act.
  - **Community space to meet additional needs identified by Brightwood Park.** Prior to the pandemic there were robust conversations organized by the Kennedy Street Revitalization Advisory Committee that should be revived to plan for a safer, more dynamic set of community resources at this intersection.
2. **\$1 Million to fund the creation of a Riggs Park violence intervention team.** I urge you to expand the footprint of the Cure the Streets program at the Office of the Attorney General by establishing a team to serve the Ward 4/Ward 5 Riggs Park neighborhood. Crew violence and turf battles are the primary drivers of violence in our community, including recent shootings and stabbings in Riggs Park. We must augment the capacity of violence interruption outreach to bring long-lasting resolutions to the feuds that plague Riggs-Lamond-Brightwood-Petworth.
  3. **Fund a WMATA bus route between Lamond-Riggs and Coolidge High School.** Students in the Lamond and Riggs Park communities need safe – and soon to be free – routes to and from school. A new school-hours bus route dedicated to Coolidge High School’s eastern boundaries would help reduce truancy and keep kids from harm’s way of dangerous traffic.
  4. **\$2 million to double the footprint of ONSE Leadership Academies to include MacFarland Middle School.** This mentoring and violence prevention program has excelled at Paul Public Charter Middle School in Ward 4. We should double the scope of the program to include one additional middle and high school; MacFarland Middle School is an ideal candidate. By helping youth make better choices in middle school we can prevent them from becoming crew and violence involved in high school. Any work with MacFarland must also include Spanish-speaking staff and mentors to be able to serve the whole student body.
  5. **\$2 million to expand gun violence-related school-based behavioral health programs and trauma-informed counseling in all DC schools.** Far too many of our children and educators are suffering direct and second-hand traumas from gun violence in their communities. These adverse childhood experiences can leave lasting scars and perpetuate cycles of violence as a child ages. We must expand the scope of behavioral health, social/emotional learning, and trauma counseling programs to address the impact of gun violence on our youth; we already fund a few non-profits and consultants to do this type of work but efforts must be expanded so every DCPS, Public Charter, and private school in the city can have timely access to support services when they face a tragedy in their community.
  6. **\$15 million to open two 24/7 harm reduction centers to prevent overdoses.** In December I visited OnPoint NYC in Harlem, which hosts the country’s first safe and supervised drug consumption center, in addition to providing comprehensive harm reduction services such as medical care, counseling, drug testing, meals, laundry, showers, meditation/rest and relaxation rooms, and more. The District could save hundreds of lives by replicating their whole-person-care model. Two 24/7 safe consumption and harm reduction facilities and an expanded mobile

outreach program – primarily funded but not run directly by the District government – will maximize our overdose prevention effectiveness. Additionally, the city should restructure and grow the Department of Behavioral Health’s Community Response Team (CRT) program to operate Ward-based teams; dedicated Ward teams will hasten crisis responses.

- 7. Double the number of Tenant-Based LRSP Vouchers for returning citizens and for gun violence victims and their families.** The Local Rent Supplement Program provides necessary stability for some of our most vulnerable residents – stable, affordable housing for justice-involved residents and victims of violence is essential for preventing recidivism, supporting rehabilitation, and disrupting cycles of violence that too easily persist when our families remain in harm’s way. For gun violence victims, access to safe housing is essential to restoring a sense of stability and safety after experiencing trauma. And it is especially critical that we have enough housing assistance programs for youth victims of gun violence; adverse childhood experiences are indicators of future violence, and this is a cycle that must be stopped.
- 8. \$18.6 million for domestic violence survivor housing.** Housing is the #1 unmet need for domestic violence survivors in the District; it should be no surprise, then, that domestic violence is also a leading cause of homelessness for women and families. The District needs to create a new, low-barrier, culturally competent temporary shelter domestic violence survivors as well as a new permanent-supportive housing complex for survivors. At least 50 units are needed to address this safe housing crisis. 100 new short-term, emergency housing vouchers are also necessary to support survivors in the immediate aftermath of violence, separation, sexual assault, or other crises. And the organizations who provide domestic violence housing, legal, and counseling services all need grant raises!
- 9. \$500,000 to expand the private security camera incentive program to cover data storage costs and enable more residents to receive vouchers.** Cameras can only meaningfully deter and assist in solving crime when they are funded to preserve footage, and many Ward 4 seniors and business owners have noted a financial barrier to data storage costs of the cameras installed on their properties. Other residents have noted financial barriers to the upfront costs of camera systems indicating a need to expand the voucher program beyond those enrolled in public assistance programs. Finally, our older residents and residents with disabilities need assistance with the physical installation of cameras. A modernized program should ensure any funds expended for this purpose are coupled with installation support and consumer trainings.
- 10. Create transformational change at DC Jail, now.** Like our public housing, the conditions at DC’s correctional facilities have long been unacceptable and in need of transformation. Too many people are coming back more broken than they went in. We must take bold steps to overhaul our facilities, services, and programming. This reform is necessary for reducing recidivism and advancing public safety so we must not wait a moment longer to fully fund the construction of a new non-traditional correctional facility in alignment with recommendations of the DC Jails and Justice Task Force. Further, additional funding and staffing is needed to immediately restore and expand rehabilitation-oriented educational, vocational, and wellness programming at DC Jail.

## **Becoming a More Equitable District**

- 1. \$1 million increase in funding for CFSA and DC Health Home Visiting programs.** Strong foundations reduce inequalities and family separations later in life and home visiting is a proven strategy for helping every child and parent get off to their best start. Home visiting providers are already eligible, and urgently need, to receive indirect service grant increases under the Nonprofit Fair Compensation Act of 2020 (L23-185) but we must also increase funding to expand the scope of their work. Additional funding so programs can hire new home visitors to serve more families for longer periods of time is a policy goal I look forward to working with you to achieve as the new Chair of the Committee on Facilities and Family Services.
- 2. \$120 Million for Emergency Rental Assistance (ERAP).** Thank you for significantly increasing ERAP funding in FY23, yet I still hear from too many Ward 4 residents that they are facing eviction because ERAP has too many applications and too few funds to go around. *We must break the cycle of underbudgeting for ERAP and running out of aid midway through the year.* We also need to reform ERAP to allow the program to cover future rent payments, similar to the STAY DC program. ERAP funding must also include additional resources for DHS and its grantees to expand staffing capacities to review and pay applications quicker.
- 3. \$15 million to increase pay for directors of early childhood education (ECE) programs.** In 2022 the District achieved multiple milestones in pursuit of a higher quality, more equitable early education system. Among them, OSSE successfully implemented early childhood educators' wage increases through the pay equity fund and began enforcing the long-overdue first phase of educator credential requirements. As of December 2022, all ECE program directors are required to hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's with at least 15 semester credit hours in early education. I am grateful OSSE recognizes the inextricable connection between an educator's training and their program's quality. Now, to jointly reflect the new credential requirements and the salary scale established by the early childhood education equitable compensation task force, additional funding is needed to raise pay for ECE program directors to fairly compensate their work and to retrain and recruit this expertise in our most foundational education settings for DC youth.
- 4. Adequately fund the paid family and medical leave for District workers.** Last year the Council passed the District Government Paid Leave Enhancement Act to establish paid medical leave for all city employees and to expand paid family and parental leave benefits. The bill is estimated at \$24 million to fully implement each year, though some of those costs should be absorbed by reconfiguring our District leave bank policies. Additionally, the universal paid family leave program for the private-sector needs additional funding to sustain sufficient DOES staffing, programmatic promotion, and other administrative overhead costs. Please work with the CFO to ensure the tax rate is adjusted to account for full staffing of the private-sector program and work with DCHR to adjust fringe benefits and budget for the implementation of the city government program. Investing in generous paid leave policies makes District employers more competitive as we work to recover our economy.
- 5. \$1 million to protect the rights of domestic and restaurant workers.** With the recent passage of workplace protections for domestic workers (nannies, house cleaners, home health aides,

etc.) and raises for restaurant and other tipped workers, the city must now make these laws real with robust know-your-rights campaigns and strategic enforcement. Funding is needed at DOES (\$400,000), OAG (\$300,000 as grants), and OHR (\$300,000) for enforcement staffing and outreach programming. Augmenting implementation funding in FY24 should not deter the city from acting immediately within its current capacities to inform workers of their new rights.

6. **\$52 Million to increase SNAP benefits.** The Give SNAP a Raise Amendment Act, as passed last Council Period, requires the city to raise SNAP benefits 10% beginning in FY24. Helping District families put healthy food on the table cannot be delayed.
7. **Advance dignity in the District’s Homeward DC goals for single adults.** Our city's continued reliance on encampment clearings traumatizes and displaces unhoused residents without addressing the underlying reasons a person chooses to live outdoors when they experience homelessness. To prevent further harm, we need to build more small, non-congregate, service-rich shelters in every Ward that cater to the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. We also need significant increases in grant funds to remedy our case worker shortage which is one of the leading reasons it takes too long to move someone to stable house. And we need more capacity in our homeless-diversion programs for single adults (\$2.5 million for Rapid Rehousing and \$300,000 for Project Reconnect). Finally, barring unmitigable circumstances, the District should not spend money on encampment clearings or cleanings until all impacted residents are able to move directly into stable housing; invest in services not displacement.

**I also urge you to maintain level funding, at a minimum, for the following priorities:**

- The Brightwood Park-Petworth Cure the Streets program, and all OAG Cure programs.
- All grants for Ward 4’s Main Streets: The Parks, Upper Georgia Avenue, Uptown, Takoma, and Petworth.
- \$935,000 for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children.
- All local and TANF funds for child care subsidies, dedicated and rollover funding for the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, and funds committed to strengthening early childhood development through Healthy Steps and Healthy Futures.

Please see Appendix A on the following page for a list of new and existing physical infrastructure needs in Ward 4. Thank you for your attention to these FY24 budget priorities that can improve the quality of life in our Ward and throughout the city.

In service,



Janeese Lewis George  
Councilmember, Ward 4  
Chair, Committee on Facilities and Family Services



# Appendix A

## Priority infrastructure projects for Ward 4 roadways and at School and Recreational Facilities

The list below reflects new and outstanding maintenance, physical infrastructure, or small capital projects priorities. Many of these issues remain open work orders from my 2022 DPR summer readiness and DCPS back-to-school tours. Please contact my committee office for follow up and expected completion dates on these maintenance items:

### **DCPS Properties**

- Barnard Elementary School needs safety improvements to their pull through parking lot
- Brightwood Elementary School marquee new installation needed
- Brightwood Elementary School front door buzzer requires new installation
- Coolidge High School track bathroom plumbing needs to be replaced
- Lafayette Elementary School track and field both need to be replaced
- MacFarland Middle School media center roof leaks and security system replacements
- Military Road Early Learning Center playground surface needs to be replaced
- Powell Elementary School playground needs to be re-leveled to prevent flooding and erosion
- Roosevelt High School HVAC system needs a complete overhaul
- Shepherd Elementary School/Community Center needs new exterior stairs from the gym to the soccer field
- Whittier Elementary School HVAC system replacements in old wing

### **DPR Properties**

- Emery Heights Community Center HVAC and field repairs needed sooner
- Fort Stevens Recreation Center splash pad needs to be replaced
- Hamilton Recreation Center install a new spray park
- Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center needs a solution to persistent runoff and erosion at the park and down-lit lighting should be installed around the back of the facility. DPR is aware of the need for field improvements and had represented in a meeting with you and I in November 2022 that \$1.5 million was available for this purpose; however, DPR has since admitted a mistake and confirmed funding is *not* available. I request this project be funded for FY24, or sooner.
- Lamond Recreation Center swing set requires a new installation
- Petworth Recreation Center outdoor sunshade replacement
- Raymond Recreation Center outdoor community exercise equipment needs replacing
- Riggs-LaSalle Recreation Center neighbors request a track be added around their fields; spray park renovations
- Shepherd Park Community Center field net above the fence needs to be replaced
- Takoma Recreation Center roof leaks, HVAC repairs and carpet replacements in non-pool section; pool locker room facilities need modernizations without shuttering pool access
- Upshur Recreation Center dog park gravel needs to be replaced; ensure timely modernization
- Grant Circle (Reservation 312i) requires a small new DPR maintained toddler playground at the current location or another community-supported location nearby

### **DDOT Projects**

- Load funding to implement the multimodal transit improvement recommended set forth in the East Rock Creek I Livability Study. Design plans have been completed and now await urgent execution along:
  - Corridors 1 and 3, Georgia Avenue, NW North and South, respectively
  - Intersection 1, Georgia Avenue and Alaska Avenue NW
  - Intersection 2, Blair Road and Aspen Street NW
- Include funding for the next segment of the Georgia Avenue Bus Priority Project (Kansas to Eastern NW)
- Implement major improvements for pedestrian safety and traffic calming at Grant and Sherman Circles
- Move up funding for rehabilitating Eastern Avenue, NE between New Hampshire and Whittier
- Include funding for a new park and connected cycle tracks around the future Metropolitan Branch Trail Trailhead at Riggs Road and South Dakota Avenue, NE
- Improve multimodal safety along South Dakota Avenue NE in Riggs Park/Fort Totten
- Install much needed all-way traffic signals at Alaska and Geranium NW and at Illinois & Emerson NW