

Mayor Tom Barrett
2007 Budget Address
September 26, 2006

Good morning President Hines, members of the Common Council, honored guests and residents of the great City of Milwaukee.

Making Milwaukee a safer and economically stronger city is my number one priority. From increasing the police budget to putting more money into street lights, my 2007 proposed budget directs resources into making Milwaukee safer and stronger.

A safer Milwaukee does require more police officers. In 2007, I am proposing to increase the Police Department budget by \$5 million to \$214 million. That's equivalent to 97.3% of the proposed 2007 property tax levy.

By combining additional money for overtime with funding for additional police recruit classes and new personnel, the net result of this increase will be more than 50 additional officers on the street – the largest increase since 1996 and the greatest sworn strength the Police Department has had since 2000.

From cops to cameras to continuing our crack downs on cruising and curfew, I want to employ every available strategy to make Milwaukee neighborhoods safer.

A safer, stronger Milwaukee is also about investing in our city and our job market. It's about funding public health and putting more of our young people to work so they are prepared for their future. We have a responsibility to address all of these issues and we must do so without blowing the lid off taxes and fees.

A stronger Milwaukee requires us to invest more in our infrastructure and in financing job development. In 2007, I am proposing a \$12.2 million increase in tax incremental financing to \$74.4 million, including \$43.2 million for new projects like the Pabst and Tower sites.

A safer, stronger Milwaukee also means that we have to give our children and families a fighting chance to get out of poverty. I am proposing new partnerships to address infant mortality, health disparities and access to community health clinics. These partnerships will go a long way toward making our families healthier and stronger.

Do we have limited resources? Of course we do, and so do families throughout the City. But just like those moms and dads and grandparents, we must do more with less.

Last year I proposed, along with my 2006 budget, a three-year plan to identify our fiscal challenges and proposed ways to meet them so that we could devote more resources toward making our city safer and stronger economically. My 2007 budget continues to do that.

We are on the right track because of some tough decisions and hard work. I want to thank the members of the Common Council and my Administration who answered the call to get finances under control. Efficiency is about making smart choices and looking for innovations.

And we have done some good work this year.

Over the summer, with help from the state and support from city managers, we were able to expand the Summer Jobs program to include almost 1000 high-school students who we put to work in city internships, non-profit organizations and the private sector.

We completed a consolidation of DPW facilities and services at the former Tower Automotive site, a move that is creating greater efficiencies and saving taxpayer dollars. We eliminated 26 duplicative positions and gave the taxpayers a break.

Over the last two years, our economic investment efforts have leveraged tremendous growth – both short term and long term. From the 270 jobs at Palermo’s in the Valley to the 2,000 jobs expected at the expanded Direct Supply on the northwest side, we have created over 10,000 job opportunities; opportunities that will be realized in the months and years to come.

One of our largest efforts was the partnership we forged to support Manpower’s move into Milwaukee. Through our joint efforts, we will provide an additional boost to the city and further strengthen our neighborhoods through job training and investment. Members of the Council, you should be proud of that and I thank you for working with me to grow Milwaukee.

We broke ground on catalytic projects around the city this year: the Downtown Amtrak station, the Harley-Davidson museum, Lindsay Commons and Josey Heights – the city’s first green housing subdivision. We broke ground at Columbia Savings bank and El Rey grocery and opened the doors on several businesses in Bronzeville.

We are leading by example in the Park East where we broke ground on the Flatiron, a mixed-use development that was formerly the only city-owned parcel in the corridor.

This is all good news. But we know there is more work to be done. If we are to continue moving Milwaukee forward, we must work together to increase the value of the services our residents depend on. To do that, we must modernize, streamline and become more efficient.

The budget I bring before you today represents a 3.3 percent increase in the property tax levy which translates to an overall 3.1 percent increase in taxes and municipal fees for residential property owners. Part of the reason the impact on homeowners is relatively modest is because for the first time in several years, growth in assessed values is stronger in commercial properties than residential. Proving that investment in the city continues to grow.

And while this budget contains several exciting new proposals, our operating budget is only increasing by 2.7 percent. This is a key consideration as we continue efforts to reduce the structural imbalance that keeps us from spending more on our priorities and less on our debt obligations.

My budget also includes a \$14 million decrease in levy-supported borrowing since 2003. This is a critical component of my three-year plan to strengthen our fiscal future and stabilize city finances.

But we must continue to move Milwaukee forward today.

Police/Fire/Health: Protecting our residents

A strong police force is necessary in the fight against crime. Last November 11, eight of you took a courageous vote to increase fees so that over a 13 month period, we could hire 180 additional police officers. That was a tough vote – a vote that truly backed up your belief that our citizens should not have a reduction in the police department’s level of strength.

If all goes as we’ve planned, we’ll have a total of 200 recruits through the scheduled classes. On behalf of the citizens of Milwaukee, I thank those of you who took that vote.

I also want to thank Governor Doyle and state legislators for directing state funds to Milwaukee so that over the summer months we could put more cops on the street with increased overtime and targeted patrols.

In this budget, through two additional police recruit classes, increased money for overtime, and funding for up to 15 community service officers and 13 part-time Police Service Specialists, we will put at least 50 more officers on the streets. Again, this is the most significant net increase in sworn strength since 1996 and will give us the largest sworn personnel strength level since 2000.

In addition to allowing the department to not only allocate more time to proactive, quality-of-life strategies, without sacrificing response time in calls for service, these efforts will assign more patrol officers and detectives to activities that are directly related to fighting crime.

At the same time I am directing more of our resources to fighting crime, I have asked the State Department of Corrections to direct more of its resources to Milwaukee. I have asked for more agents to be assigned to Milwaukee police district stations and I have asked that the State's re-entry program be tightened up and better coordinated with Milwaukee Police.

While I am at, let me assure you that despite the editorial comments from one suburban congressman, I will not let-up on the fight to get illegal guns off our streets.

My proposed budget also enhances police accountability, which I believe will go a long way in improving community police relations. Specifically, I am providing funding to support a restructuring of the Fire and Police Commission as an independent unit of governance with stronger oversight and auditing capacity.

We have a responsibility to provide strong police protection to our residents. We also have a responsibility to protect and care for the most vulnerable of our city residents, our children.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Leo Brideau, President and CEO of Columbia/St. Mary's and the Columbia/St. Mary's Board and staff for the many hours they have spent working with our Health Commissioner Bevan Baker to devise a plan to reduce our city's infant mortality rate.

Today, I am announcing that Columbia/St. Mary's will invest \$500,000 next year in this new partnership. The partnership calls for intensive case management services for up to 80 of our most at-risk mothers.

The funding will also support creation of a Center for Health Equity, which will exert leadership in reducing racially defined health disparities. Leo, I want to thank you and Columbia/St. Mary's for your commitment to Milwaukee. I also want to acknowledge Bevan Baker and his staff for their excellent work on this partnership.

Because of the termination of the City's federal Medicare waiver after 27 years, two of our community health centers, Johnston and Coggs, will be forced to close.

To ensure that patients from Johnston and Coggs Health Centers will continue to receive crucial care, we joined forces with Sixteenth Street Community Health Center, Milwaukee Health Services and Aurora Health Care. Sixteenth Street is expanding into a new facility. Milwaukee Health Services is expanding on King Drive. And Aurora came forward with investments of over \$3 million for facility and service improvements.

To make the patient transition complete, I am directing \$280,000 in support through the Community Health Services Fund.

I'd like to thank Paul Nannis from Aurora, C.C. Henderson from Milwaukee Health Services and John Bartkowski from Sixteenth Street Community Health Center for their extraordinary commitment to Milwaukee.

We will also be directing more funds next year to improve immunization rates of Milwaukee children. An outbreak of mumps in the Midwest earlier this year highlighted a need to make sure that our kids have received age-appropriate vaccinations at the time they enter school to avoid a potential crisis.

Our efforts to protect children and their families extend to other departments of city government. To further reduce the rate of infant mortality, the Milwaukee Fire Department EMS operation has developed a new initiative in conjunction with local hospitals called "Safe Sleep for Infants."

This program will leverage the Fire Department/EMS community presence as a mechanism to distribute portable cribs to families of infants at risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

I am also calling for funding to support the Fire Department's initiatives aimed at improving fire prevention and fire safety. Incident scene safety management has become one of the most significant components that support firefighter safety.

My budget will add three Captain positions to the Fire Department to serve as Incident Safety Officers. These personnel will perform overall risk management at fire scenes, focusing on all aspects of an incident, in order to protect the welfare of fire fighters and respondents.

Lastly, I am calling for a \$50,000 special fund to increase fire safety efforts already in progress. In addition to supporting activities such as smoke alarm installation, this fund will also pay for the recommendations of a project that is looking into more effective methods to educate residents in the areas of the city that have the greatest fire risk.

This city is committed to our public safety. Our firefighters and paramedics provide exceptional fire-based emergency medical care to victims of violent traumatic acts. Because of the rapid and efficient care by Milwaukee's firefighters and paramedics, almost 95% of victims of penetrating trauma survive these traumatic events. I want to thank the Milwaukee Fire Department and EMS for their phenomenal hard work protecting our city.

Housing

We also share a responsibility to provide residents at every level of income a safe and clean place to live. Better housing creates stronger neighborhoods where children and families feel supported and safe. There are wonderful organizations that support this philosophy every day and I want to thank Sara Kierzek from Habitat for Humanity for the work of her great organization.

The City operates more than 4400 units of subsidized housing and provides rental vouchers to more than 5200 households. We are the largest provider of housing to low-income residents in the City.

I am proposing that the City will continue to support affordable housing through several new initiatives in 2007: \$250,000 will be made available to buy out Habitat for Humanity mortgages and to help renovate and construct new units.

In addition, I am proposing that one-half of the City's share of excess revenues in closed tax incremental districts be deposited in a new Housing Development Challenge Fund. The fund will also accept private contributions. Project submissions will have to demonstrate a dollar for dollar match from non-City sources. This approach could generate close to \$4 million over the next 10 years.

In November a TID will be introduced to support a new single family initiative in Metcalfe Park. Through a partnership with Gorman & Company and the Milwaukee Urban League, 30 single family homes will be constructed for renters, who will have an option to buy their homes some years down the road.

I don't expect this to be the last and final word on meeting affordable housing needs. I would be disappointed if it were. What I do expect is a firm cash commitment from Milwaukee County, other local governments, the state, the federal government, the advocates and private interests.

The responsibility for financing affordable housing and services for the homeless does not lie with the City of Milwaukee alone. On moral and financial grounds, this is a shared responsibility.

Jobs

We continue to make excellent progress on bringing opportunities to businesses who wish to relocate or expand here. At the same time, we need to work harder at connecting residents with existing jobs in our region and making sure they have the tools and skills necessary to fill them.

Increasing employment and creating a stable financial future for our residents is critical to addressing crime and poverty in our city.

My budget includes \$200,000 for a new Drivers License and Employment Initiative. Job opportunities exist in our region but are not accessible by public transportation.

This program will reduce a significant barrier to employment for many residents by combining practical assistance to persons seeking license reinstatement. I want to thank Tyrone Dumas and Judge Jim Gramling for their hard work in getting this initiative off the ground.

I mentioned earlier the tremendous success of the 2006 Summer Jobs Program. Thanks to your support, additional state funds and the help of partners in the private sector, we were able to successfully provide close to 1,000 jobs to Milwaukee youth in city government, not-for-profit and faith-based organizations and the private sector.

We were able to give these students a chance to experience careers they might not otherwise have considered while keeping them off the streets and giving them a chance to earn a few bucks.

Next year I want to expand the program even further with a full-time youth employment coordinator. We must do everything in our power to support our city's youth by keeping them out of trouble and preparing them for a positive, bright future.

An investment now means that our children will be prepared for family-supporting jobs in the future. We need to have higher expectations for them and step in where others have broken down.

City Services

We will also continue to provide the high quality of services that our residents value and expect of City government and deliver them in an efficient manner. This year I propose increases of \$1.9 million for local streets; \$1.5 million for street lights; and \$2 million for sewers and water main improvements.

I've even directed DPW to turn the street lights on earlier around Daylight Savings Time. This small step will help residents feel safer as they adjust to the shorter days.

These investments in basic infrastructure allow for development to occur and support reinvestment by owners in their homes and businesses.

But improvements to city services don't have to mean adding to the city budget. Through better partnerships between departments, we can improve services and actually save money.

For example, DPW and DNS are partnering to be more efficient at picking up nuisance garbage, a service that used to take up to 14 days after a notification was posted. To speed things up, I have directed that after the regular seven-day notification period, DNS will refer all cleanups to DPW whose goal will then be to remove the nuisance within three days.

Enhancing quality-of-life services also goes a long way toward helping us attract residential and commercial investment in the city. To further that goal, I am proposing a \$25,000 planning grant for redevelopment on Villard Avenue. This will support existing efforts of the local Business Improvement District and community-based organizations.

Another important neighborhood quality of life program is our city library system. I assure you that our 2007 budget includes enough resources to keep all our neighborhood libraries open with no reduction to their service hours.

Closing

As I wrap up, I want to thank the city employees who serve the residents of Milwaukee every day and reiterate my commitment to making sure that the City of Milwaukee remains a great place to work. I will continue to work with Alderman Murphy on a collective bargaining strategy and I look forward to developing an agreement with unions that strikes a balance between our limited resources and our obligations to our employees.

Milwaukee truly is a great American City. We all recognize that we have challenges. But I have no doubt that we can take on those challenges and, in the process, make Milwaukee a safer, stronger city.

By holding the line on taxes and making the investments necessary to provide more police protection, increase job development and enhance our health and safety, we're making Milwaukee stronger.

I look forward to working with you as we do just that.

Thank you.