




September 10, 2025

## **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

From: Sheryl M.M. Long, City Manager 

Subject: **Summary of Fire Department Support and Investments**

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The purpose of this memo is to provide context and information regarding the City's significant investment in the Cincinnati Fire Department (CFD) and its employees. The City Administration has been and remains committed to ensuring that the department receives ample resources.

We have a responsibility to take care of these dedicated public servants. Investing in the tools they need to do their jobs is understood to be fundamental; but investing in their health, growth, and wellness is equally crucial.

The City Administration is proud to support the CFD and thankful for Local 48's collaborative approach to sharing ideas, solving problems, and protecting the interests of our everyday heroes in the department.

The [2023-2026 Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) (CBA) includes historic wage increases and several significant benefits for employees, including updates that better support health and wellness.

Please see the summaries below, which include details of Fire Fighter wage investments; increased Fire Fighter medical benefits; a list of Capital Fund investments to support CFD; explanation of CFD staffing, complement, and recruit class history; an analysis of CFD spending and wages compared to fire departments in peer cities; and recent capital investments to support CFD.

To demonstrate this commitment, I will highlight five specific examples below of how we invest in our firefighters. These examples show not only the depth of our support but also the City's dedication to their safety, health, and professional excellence.

### **1. Fire Fighter Wages**

**Cincinnati Fire Fighters are among the best paid Fire Fighters in Ohio when compared with our peer Cities.**

The Cincinnati Fire Fighters Union (Local 48) received historic wage increases to members' total compensation package, including general wage increases of 5% in Year 1, 4% in Year 2, and 3% in Year 3 as well as lump sum payments of \$1,000 in Year 1 and \$500 in Year 2.

Additionally, the City rolled the 2.5% Fire Fighter certification pay into all Local 48 members' base pay, which increased employees' overtime compensation, certification pays, and working out of classification pay.

As the table below displays, Cincinnati pays higher wages on aggregate than any peer city but Columbus, but Cincinnati maintains a higher starting wage than Columbus.

	Fire Fighter (or equivalent)	Fire Lieutenant (or equivalent)	Fire Captain (or equivalent)	District Chief (or equivalent)
Cincinnati	\$71,011 to \$89,759 <sup>1</sup>	\$104,120	\$120,779	\$140,104
Cleveland	\$63,827 to \$75,304	\$87,352	\$101,328	\$117,541
Columbus	\$66,643 to \$106,823	\$123,915	\$143,741	\$169,614
Akron	\$65,852 to \$76,606	\$79,789 to \$88,795	\$92,539 to \$103,210	\$107,307 to \$119,808
Toledo	\$56,903 to \$93,211 <sup>2</sup>	\$99,243 to \$101,761	\$114,130 to \$117,027	\$135,751
Dayton	\$61,761 <sup>3</sup> to \$88,362 <sup>4</sup>	\$85,236 <sup>5</sup> to \$102,530 <sup>6</sup>	\$98,918 <sup>8</sup> to \$118,950 <sup>9</sup>	\$114,876 to \$127,754

<sup>1</sup> Cincinnati pays Fire Apparatus Operators \$99,848; this job type is not represented in peer cities for this analysis.

<sup>2</sup> The highest wage for a Fire Fighter/Paramedic

<sup>3</sup> The lowest wage for a Fire Fighter/EMT

<sup>4</sup> The highest wage for a Fire Fighter/Paramedic

<sup>5</sup> The lowest wage for a Fire Lieutenant/EMT

<sup>6</sup> The highest wage for a Fire Lieutenant/Paramedic

<sup>7</sup> The lowest wage for a Fire Captain/EMT

<sup>8</sup> The highest wage for a Fire Captain/Paramedic

**Sources:**

<https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/serb.ohio.gov/PDF/Contracts/2021/21-MED-12-1589.pdf>

<https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/serb.ohio.gov/PDF/Contracts/2023/23-MED-07-0560.pdf>

<https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/serb.ohio.gov/PDF/Contracts/2021/21-MED-08-0963.pdf>

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/akron/classspecs/879420?keywords=fire&pagetype=classSpecifications>

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<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/akron/classspecs/788576?keywords=fire%20district&pagetype=classSpecifications>

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/toledooh/classspecs/960438?keywords=fire%20fighter&pagetype=classSpecifications>

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/toledooh/classspecs/960440?keywords=fire%20fighter&pagetype=classSpecifications>

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<https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/serb.ohio.gov/PDF/Contracts/2024/24-CON-07-1715.pdf>

**2. Fire Fighter Medical Benefits**

The City Administration has consistently invested in improving medical benefits for Fire Fighters, particularly improvements to addressing screening and care for cancer.

**The City expanded benefits so members with occupational cancer, cardiovascular disease, or pulmonary disease receive full salary and benefits for up to two years while in recovery.**

The City substantially expanded Local 48's injury with pay benefits to include members disabled due to a presumptive occupational cancer diagnosis, a presumptive cardiovascular disease diagnoses, and a presumptive pulmonary disease diagnosis. This expansion ensures that our CFD members battling these illnesses receive their full salary and benefits (vacation, holiday, longevity, service requirement allowance, and clothing allowance) for up to two years, allowing them to focus on recovery.

Previously, members that received an occupational cancer diagnosis, cardiovascular disease diagnosis, or a pulmonary disease diagnosis were *not* eligible for injury pay related to these diagnoses, regardless of whether the conditions were determined to be work-related.

The City and Union worked together to update the contract in regard to sick leave, ensuring that members are more able to easily utilize sick with pay for mental health and other illnesses.

Many Union members expressed concerns regarding cancer screening, treatment, and care, and the City has addressed these concerns both in the CBA and outside of the negotiation process. As outlined above, the City expanded Local 48's injury with pay benefits to include members disabled due to a presumptive occupational cancer diagnosis. Recently, the City approved the recommendation from CFD to award a contract for RFP 255X901010 – Program Occupational Medical Exam. The selected vendor will offer medical evaluations, fitness evaluations, and cancer screenings to all members as part of regular department operations and while on-duty, meaning Fire Fighters can more easily take care of their health and wellness and maintain work-life balance.

As of January 1, 2025, all cancer screenings covered by Anthem are now provided to all Fire Fighters, regardless of age or other risk factors, due to the inherent risk of their firefighting duties. All screenings are covered by the City at 100% and \$0 copay to the member. Meanwhile, the Occupational Cancer Health Plan allows approved fire cancer claims to pay 100% using regular Anthem city insurance rather than beginning the workers' comp process. And cancer concierge services are now being offered to any Fire employees and their families who are interested in the added level of guidance and assistance through their cancer treatment. (These benefits were provided outside of the negotiation process.)

And recently, the Union brought up concerns regarding Local 48 members utilizing their sick leave for follow-up appointments for a prior occupational cancer diagnosis. Shortly after these concerns were elevated to City leadership, several options to address the Union's concerns were proposed to City Council, including the option to create a new benefit for Local 48 members.

### **3. CFD Staffing Levels, Complement, and Recruit Class History**

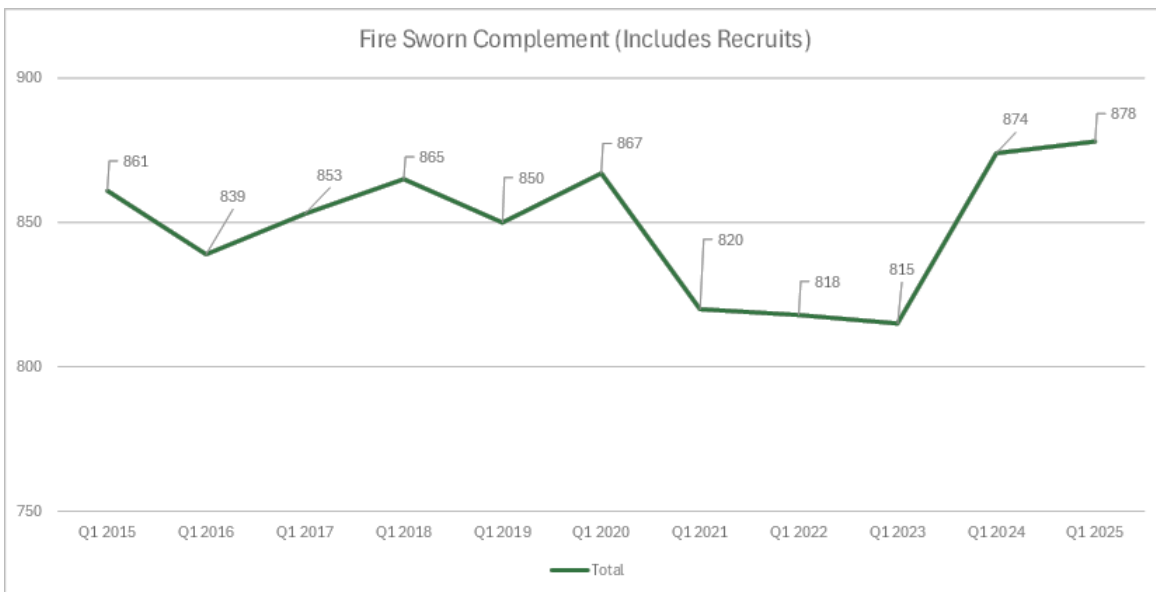
**Intentional investments by the City Administration, Mayor, and Council have ensured that the current CFD sworn complement is the highest it has been in a decade.**

**CFD currently has the highest sworn complement in the last 10 years at 888 Full Time Employees (FTE).**

Fire is currently at 888 FTE for their sworn complement, with the budgeted sworn complement at 859. This is the first time since 2019 (before the Covid-19 pandemic) that CFD is at its budgeted sworn complement, and it is the highest level of sworn complement in the last ten years.

Due to attrition, too few recruit classes, and the pandemic, when this Mayor and Council took office, Fire’s sworn complement was at the lowest level since 2012. At the recommendation of the City Administration, this Mayor and Council have prioritized recruit classes and invested in two recruit classes per year and increasing the class size from 40 to 50. Now that the sworn complement has been restored, the Council and Mayor have funded a future recruit class in each year of the FY 2026-2027 Biennial Budget to maintain that sworn complement number. See below for information on recruit class size, graduation dates, and sworn complement trends:

Class #	Budgeted FTE	Dates
117	40	Graduated Jul. 2019
118	40	Graduated Nov. 2021
119	40	Graduated Aug. 2022
120	50	Graduated Feb. 2023
121	50	Graduated Nov. 2023
122	50	Graduated Sep. 2024
123	50	Graduated Jul. 2025
124	50	Allocated FY 2026
125	50	Allocated FY 2027



**4. CFD Operating Expenditures as Compared to Peer Cities**

**Cincinnati proportionally invests more in our Fire Department than nearly every other Ohio peer city. 508.99 per resident invested in CFD-higher than Cleveland, Columbus, Toledo, Akron, and Dayton.**

	GF expenditure per capita
<b>Cincinnati</b>	<b>\$508.99</b>
Dayton	\$480.12
Cleveland	\$420.19
Columbus	\$360.29
Toledo	\$354.72
Akron	\$239.08

Cincinnati invests 27.9% (\$160.3 million) of the General Fund in the Fire Department. This is higher than every other major City in Ohio and is only surpassed by Dayton, which is much smaller.

	% of GF budget spent on Fire
Dayton	29.5%
<b>Cincinnati</b>	<b>27.9%</b>
Columbus	27.4%
Toledo	25.8%
Akron	21.6%
Cleveland	18.9%

Cincinnati has more Fire Fighters per capita than any peer city but Cleveland, with which it is roughly tied.

	Fire Fighters per 1,000 of Population
Cleveland	2.78
<b>Cincinnati</b>	<b>2.73</b>
Dayton	2.26
Toledo	2.22
Akron	2.12
Columbus	1.89

Sources:

[https://www.clevelandohio.gov/sites/clevelandohio/files/finance-docs/2025\\_City%20of%20Cleveland%20Budget%20Book%20\(final\)\\_Signed.pdf](https://www.clevelandohio.gov/sites/clevelandohio/files/finance-docs/2025_City%20of%20Cleveland%20Budget%20Book%20(final)_Signed.pdf)  
<https://www.columbus.gov/files/sharedassets/city/v/2/finance/budget/2025/fy2025-proposed-operating-budget.pdf>  
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**5. Summary of Capital Fund Investments to Support CFD**

In addition to the above support, the Administration, the Mayor, and Council have all worked to continually invest capital resources into facilities, fleet, and equipment to support the Fire Department’s operations and employees resulting in over \$17 million in new capital projects.

- The recently completed Fire Training Facility was an investment of \$17.2 million.
- The FY 2026-FY 2031 Six Year Capital Improvement Plan includes a Fire Station Replacement project as part of Cincy On Track. This \$12 million spend is phased over two fiscal years—\$5 million in FY 2028 and \$7 million in FY 2029.

- \$1.1 million of American Rescue Plan funds were used for Fire Fleet (2 pumpers).
- Of the \$11 million fleet allocation in FY 2026, \$4.1 million (37.3%) is earmarked for Fire (2 pumpers, 1 ladder truck, and 3 medic unit remounts).
- The City Manager also intends to make an additional capital allocation to support the Fire Department as part of the FY 2025 Closeout process.

### **Conclusion**

The City's significant investments in public safety reflect our goal of protecting residents' lives, property, and well-being. Using City resources to deploy police officers, build and maintain Fire Department infrastructure, purchase vehicles and technology, and address quality-of-life issues is the function by which we help Cincinnatians stay safe.

But the most significant resource available to us is the people who do the work of public safety—the first responders who take an oath to protect our community.