

2021 Pandemic Recovery Priorities
A 10-Point Checklist



Public Safety – *Public safety remains our highest priority and is uncompromised as a result of COVID challenges.*

❑ **Status: April 2021**

Mayor Stothert has authorized a new police recruit class to begin in April which will bring the Omaha Police Department to full budgeted and sworn strength and position the department to re-engage on intervention, prevention, and engagement.

COVID restrictions interfered with the normal operations of the Omaha Police Department and impacted the high levels of personal interaction with the community. Intervention, prevention and community engagement practices between officers and community members will return to successful pre-pandemic levels.



Extend the Mask Ordinance – *We will support the extension of the mask ordinance.*

❑ **Status: February 2021**

The ordinance, first passed by the City Council and signed by Mayor Stothert in September 2020 expires on February 23, 2021. Mayor Stothert supports the proposed extension of the ordinance until May 25, 2021.



Vaccine Distribution and Advocacy – *We will continue our partnerships with the State of Nebraska and Douglas County to support public health measures and the safe and efficient administration of the COVID vaccines.*

❑ **Status: Ongoing**

We will promote and encourage vaccinations through public education and outreach to ensure widespread participation.

The City is prepared, at the request of the Douglas County Health department, to host vaccination clinics at community centers and other city facilities to provide convenient, accessible locations for all citizens.

Mayor Stothert is a former critical care nurse and has registered to receive the vaccine when it is her turn. She is eager to complete vaccinations for all Omaha firefighters and police officers.

As of January 26, 2021, 441 Omaha firefighters who provide emergency patient care have received the first dose; second dose clinics are underway. Police officers are included in Phase 1-B of the state's vaccination schedule, following persons age 65 and older, and adults with high-risk medical conditions.

The Mayor's Office continues to work with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Douglas County Health Department as vaccine distribution becomes more widespread.



Rent and Utility Assistance – *We will provide residential rent and utility assistance to struggling Omaha citizens.*

□ Status: Beginning February 2021

We have secured \$22.2 million in federal funding through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 to provide financial help for those struggling to pay COVID related housing costs including rent and utility assistance and home energy costs. We will work with a community partner to develop an application process and distribute these funds as quickly as possible following approval from the Omaha City Council.

This new funding is in addition to the \$10.4 million the City received from HUD in 2020. These funds are providing rent assistance, small business support, job creation and retention, services for persons experiencing homelessness, and food for seniors.



Manage the City Budget – *We balanced the 2020 city budget and prepared the 2021 budget without tax increases or employee layoffs.*

□ Status: To be completed when budget year 2020 closes, expected March 2021

Despite early predictions of a \$75 million revenue shortfall, we anticipate a modest budget surplus between \$5-7 million for year-end 2020. This is the outcome of several factors, including Mayor Stothert's early actions to protect public health and reduce city spending.

Mayor Stothert successfully fought for Omaha to receive \$60 million in federal CARES Act funds from Douglas County and the State of Nebraska, preventing layoffs of police officers and firefighters, reopening public libraries and community centers, and stabilizing city finances at a critical time.

In 2020, the city's investments earned nearly \$18 million over budget estimates. Mayor Stothert will direct a significant portion of that investment income to the cash reserves to position the city for future emergencies.



Expand Community Service and Grant Funding – We will invite non-profit community organizations to apply for 2022 Community Service Funds directed for pandemic recovery programs and projects.

□ Status: Spring 2021

Organizations that provide services essential for pandemic recovery will be invited to apply for 2022 community service funds, allocated in the City of Omaha General Fund budget.

In addition, the 2021 Mayor’s Neighborhood Grant program will focus on neighborhood projects developed to address pandemic-related needs. Mayor Stothert will award neighborhood grants totaling approximately \$100,000 to qualifying organizations.



Underemployment -- We will increase our ongoing efforts to address unemployment and underemployment challenges citywide.

□ Status: Ongoing

Omaha’s unemployment rate has dropped back to below 3.5%* after jumping to over 9% last summer, but too many people are now underemployed or working multiple jobs to make ends meet. We have increased 2021 community service funding for job training programs and work readiness programs led by local non-profit organizations. We also remain focused on recruiting new businesses to Omaha to provide additional opportunities for full employment.

**Source: NE Department of Labor November 2020*



Restore Omaha’s Tourism Industry – We commit to providing multi-year funding to stabilize the Omaha Convention and Visitors’ Bureau (OCVB) and restore jobs in the hospitality sector as recovery begins.

□ Status: In progress

Omaha’s tourism and events industry has been devastated by pandemic cancellations, with estimated losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars. We will designate an additional \$3 million in 2021, and are committed to \$2 million in subsequent years to return the OCVB to full operations. This is critical to maintaining existing contracts, plus competing for new convention, sporting and event business. Competition for these new opportunities will be intense once recovery is well underway.



Excellent Communication and Public Education – *We will continue to provide the most critical and timely information to keep citizens updated on the testing, vaccinations and recovery strategies.*

□ Status: Ongoing

Transparent communication and public education remain critical. Since March 2020, Mayor Stothert has held more than 25 news conferences with Douglas County Health Director Dr. Adi Pour, infectious disease experts, metro hospital representatives, and other elected officials to keep the public informed about COVID impacts and steps we must all take to keep our community as safe as possible. These public updates will continue.

Mayor Stothert will introduce an additional tool to further increase communications and customer service. The City of Omaha mobile app, in development since 2020, will connect citizens with city services and provide direct access and notifications to vaccination and testing information. The app is expected to be live by mid-February.

Through a partnership with Cox Communications, the third in a series of Public Service Announcements will encourage participation and build trust in the vaccination program and will air on the Cox network beginning in early February.



Mayor’s COVID Advisory Board -- *The Mayor’s COVID Community Advisory Board will continue to provide expert guidance and identify priorities and best-case solutions.*

□ Status: Ongoing.

Mayor Stothert established the COVID Community Advisory Board by Executive Order in March 2020.

This volunteer team, which includes numerous local partners, has provided input to connect all communities within Omaha with resources, information, services and best practices for public health. Initial actions focused on basic needs including food and shelter. The Board will identify 2021 recovery priorities including youth services, small business support, mental health and health equity.

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