



I am pleased to present my first proposed budget as Mayor. As I communicated in my State of the County address, now is the time to move forward and build a better quality of life, not only for us, but also for future generations to come. In order to accomplish this task we must build our community together, and part of that is building a budget that addresses our most pressing needs. We are strongly positioned with a local economy that is thriving and attracting citizens from across the world. Orange County's population is nearly 1.4 million and it's estimated that it is growing by a net of nearly 1,000 new residents each week. We also have a record number of tourists traveling to Orange County with over 75 million visiting in 2018. With this migration and visiting influxes of people, it is important that we manage our financial resources to provide for the social and infrastructure needs of a growing community. The attached budget plan is based on a strategy of being fiscally prudent and transparent in the delivery of service to our community. The proposed \$4.7 billion budget maintains the current property tax rate, while focusing on areas that are heavily impacted by growth such as public safety, affordable housing, transportation, and various other vital services for Orange County.

The overall fiscal and economic health of the county is extremely strong. Taxable value in Orange County is estimated to be \$143.9 billion in 2019, and will generate countywide property tax proceeds of \$638 million, which is a 10.23% increase over 2018. Local unemployment is at a record low at just under 3% and new construction valued at over \$4 billion will be included on the tax rolls in 2019. This positive economic activity has resulted in strong revenue generation for many of our various fiscal units. While this is great news, it means we must work harder to manage our resources to keep pace with growth and maintain our quality of life.

One of the most important aspects of government is fostering a safe community; as such, Public Safety is one of the largest categories of the budget, totaling \$740 million or approximately 16%. It is vitally important that we provide the funding and resources necessary to effectively manage our Corrections Department, Fire Rescue Department, and Sheriff's Office. The Fire Rescue budget is \$221 million and includes adding 26 firefighters for the new Fire Station #68. This station will serve the eastern portion of Orange County, which comes on line in fiscal year 2020. We are also adding 27 firefighter paramedics to staff three new emergency rescue units that will complete our goal of having a permanent emergency rescue unit at every fire station located in unincorporated Orange County. In addition, we are continuing the work of building fire stations for the future. Our capital budget includes funding for seven new fire stations over the next five years to serve those areas experiencing heavy population growth. As the county grows, there are also significant needs related to law enforcement. The Sheriff's Office is one of the largest budgets in the county at \$275 million. I remain committed to providing the resources to keep our citizens and visitors safe. The 2020 budget includes funding for an additional 52 law enforcement deputies and 24 support personnel. We are seeing the results of these efforts as the Orange County Sheriff's Office continues to be proactive in reducing crime. Last year, crime in

unincorporated Orange County declined by 7%. The additional Sheriff's Office positions will help us keep pace with the law enforcement needs.

I am also pleased to advise you the state has agreed to add a new judge for the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida. The Circuit serves Orange and Osceola Counties covering over 2,000 square miles and more than 1.7 million residents, making it one of the largest Circuits in Florida. The Ninth Judicial Circuit has been operating with minimum resources for years and a new judge will be extremely beneficial in keeping pace with the expanding judicial caseloads. In order to build the necessary courtroom and meeting space needed at the Orange County Courthouse, \$4.5 million has been included in the budget.

A continued focus of my administration is economic development. Tourism, which infuses \$70 billion into our region annually, is a good barometer of the overall economic health of Orange County. Reaching an all-time high of 75 million visitors to the area in 2018, Orange County offers attractions, amenities, and facilities for tourists and business travelers that are second to none. In order to remain competitive in the national and global convention space, our world-class Orange County Convention Center must expand and invest in new technologies. In 2018, the Convention Center hosted 184 events, including 1.4 million people, with a total economic impact of approximately \$2.4 billion. Companies continue to choose Orange County for their conventions and business networking that allows us to break attendance records year after year. This affirms that the time is right to build in order to remain one of the top convention destinations for years to come. With the 2023 expected completion of a \$605 million capital improvement plan, the Convention Center's North/South buildings will add a Grand Concourse, including an 80,000 square foot ballroom and 60,000 square feet of meeting space. The new multi-purpose venue will add an additional 200,000 square feet of space projected to accommodate 20,000 attendees.

This budget is not just about business, it will also allow us to address social challenges in our growing community. Included in the budget is over \$87 million for innovative programs designed to address the welfare of our children and provide services to help ensure their success. This includes after school programs and summer youth programs that offer a safe haven for youth. Our Community and Family Services Department will be working with various agencies across the county to provide quality services.

Building our community together means we will work to provide a basic standard of living for all of our citizens, including our employees. As such, it is my commitment to ensure that all full-time employees of Orange County Government earn a minimum of \$15.00 an hour by the end of 2021. Included in this budget is approximately \$650,000 to start the effort to achieve this commitment. Some businesses operating in Orange County have already made this a goal and I strongly encourage others in the community to join in this hourly wage standard.

Vital to the success of any population is having adequate housing availability. This budget places a high priority on helping the disadvantaged in need of housing. It has been well reported that there is a shortage of affordable and available rental homes for individuals and families, not only in our community but also across the country. That is why the *Housing for All* Task Force was created, to launch and prioritize short and long-term solutions to address affordable housing. The recommendations generated by the *Housing for All* Task Force will help Orange County create public-private partnerships aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing units throughout our community. The plan is to allocate \$6 million over the next four years for the *Housing for All* initiative. Depending on recommendations from the Task Force, further resources may be designated as needed. This funding is in addition to the over \$10 million Orange County receives annually from state and federal funding sources for various housing assistance programs. The ultimate goal is to provide practical and lasting solutions to the affordable housing crisis in Orange County.

With growth comes the need for transportation infrastructure improvements. Our current transportation system is inadequate and has the potential to dampen economic development. The county currently allocates over \$300 million a year for transportation related expenditures and this is not enough to keep pace with growth. Included in that total is the annual allocation for LYNX, the region's public transportation provider. In fiscal year 2020, Orange County is increasing its funding amount to LYNX by 19%, which totals \$55.5 million. However, this amount only maintains the current service levels; additional funding is needed to improve service. Improving ridership for LYNX would require an increase in the frequency of passenger pick-ups, more routes, improved connectivity and a reduction in headway. The goal is to reduce the overall number of automobiles on the roadway and reduce traffic congestion, including safely supporting our pedestrians and bicyclists. We will continue to have dialogue with our community stakeholders to better define long-term transportation solutions.

A detailed overview of my proposed fiscal year 2019-20 budget is included in the following sections of this document. I encourage all of our citizens to learn more about the investments we are making in Orange County to continue to make our community a wonderful place. Now is the time to build a better quality of life, not only for us, but also for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Jerry L. Demings
Orange County Mayor

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COUNTY

GOVERNMENT

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