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COLUMBUS PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCES EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

COLUMBUS, OH – The Columbus Partnership announced today that President and CEO Alex Fischer will transition roles at the end of 2021, becoming an advisor to the organization. One Columbus President and CEO Kenny McDonald will become Fischer’s successor as president and CEO of the Columbus Partnership, effective January 1, 2022.

“The Columbus Partnership is a special organization, and I’m proud of the work we’ve done to advance the greatest city in America,” said Fischer. “After 13 extraordinary years, the time is right to pass the torch. Kenny has been my longtime partner in Columbus, and I couldn’t be more supportive of his leadership as we work together to implement this transition.”

Serving as president and CEO since 2009, Fischer transformed the Columbus Partnership from a small group of CEOs to a more diverse group of civic-minded business leaders now recognized as a model for how to engage the private sector in advancement of the community.

“The Partnership began as a few CEOs informally getting together because we cared about Columbus. Now, the table is larger and the business leadership in Columbus is more collaborative and engaged than I have ever seen,” said Leslie H. Wexner, chairman and founder of the Columbus Partnership. “Alex has demonstrated outstanding leadership.”

During his tenure, Fischer led the founding of Columbus 2020 (now known as One Columbus), Columbus’ first regional economic development organization; helped to secure Columbus’ win of the USDOT Smart City Challenge; and drove efforts to “Save the Crew,” ensuring Columbus would become the only city in the U.S. to stop a professional sports team from leaving its hometown. These accomplishments are merely a few among many that occurred during a period of historic economic growth in Central Ohio.

American Electric Power president and CEO Nick Akins; IBM iX Chief Evangelist Nancy Kramer; and Huntington President and CEO Steven Steinour; co-vice chairs of the Columbus Partnership, issued the following joint statement:

“Alex has been a pivotal leader during a transformational era in Columbus. From economic development to smart city initiatives, from public policy to placemaking – his impact is far-reaching. Our region would not be what it is today without him.

“The Columbus Partnership is beyond fortunate to have had Alex representing corporate leaders in pursuit of community good. The legacy of strong leadership and exemplary collaboration will continue with Kenny McDonald at the helm.”

McDonald has been president and CEO of One Columbus (formerly Columbus 2020) since its inception in 2010, having earned the organization international recognition as a best-in-class economic development group. He led the development and execution of regional growth strategies that resulted in record-breaking job growth, hundreds of company expansions across 11 counties, and Columbus’ growing position in the global economy. He did so while also serving as a senior executive leader of the

Partnership, working with its membership on strategic efforts to make Columbus an increasingly competitive market.

“Alex has been a guiding and visionary force for our team and our region,” said McDonald. “It has been an honor to lead One Columbus, and I look forward to expanding my leadership across all aspects of the Partnership in 2022.”

Comments from area leaders

“Alex Fischer has been an incredible partner and helped create the environment for public-private collaboration that has come to define Columbus,” said City of Columbus Mayor Andrew J. Ginther. “I have no doubt Alex will continue to play an integral role helping Columbus businesses navigate a post-pandemic recovery focused on equity and shared prosperity. I know Kenny shares that same commitment, and is well-positioned to help the Columbus Partnership and our community thrive.”

“Over many years, and especially during the past 18 months, I’ve admired and appreciated Alex’s leadership,” said Donna James, Columbus community leader and managing director of Lardon & Associates. “He is tirelessly motivated by his love of this community. There is no doubt his impact on Columbus will continue.”

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About the Columbus Partnership

The Columbus Partnership is a nonprofit organization of CEOs and top-ranking executives from Columbus’ leading businesses and institutions. Through its membership and other ally organizations across Central Ohio, the Columbus Partnership upholds a shared vision to make Columbus the most prosperous region in the United States. Learn more at columbuspartnership.com.