

MAYOR TOM HENRY'S 2023 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

THANK YOU, JOHN, FOR THAT WARM INTRODUCTION.

I APPRECIATE YOUR LEADERSHIP, POSITIVE ENERGY, AND COMMITMENT TO HELPING OTHERS SUCCEED.

FAMILY, FRIENDS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, SPECIAL GUESTS, RESIDENTS OF FORT WAYNE, WELCOME.

I'M REALLY ENCOURAGED TO BE JOINED BY ALL OF YOU HERE TODAY.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2020 THAT WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO HAVE AN AUDIENCE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED VIGILANCE AND AWARENESS AS WE WORK TO KEEP EACH OTHER AS SAFE AND HEALTHY AS POSSIBLE.

THERE IS NO QUESTION, 2022 WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR IN THE CITY OF FORT WAYNE, AND 2023 HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE EVEN BETTER.

FORT WAYNE TRULY IS A CITY LIKE NO OTHER.

OUR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TO ENGAGE, INNOVATE, AND PERFORM ARE MAKING A LASTING AND MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE.

WE SEE IT EVERY DAY LOCALLY AND OTHERS AT THE STATE AND NATIONAL LEVELS ARE TAKING NOTICE, TOO.

THROUGH THE WORK OF MY OUTSTANDING STAFF AND MANY OF YOU HERE TODAY, FORT WAYNE HAS BECOME AN AWARD-WINNING CITY.

WE'VE BEEN NAMED THE 3RD BEST RUN CITY IN THE COUNTRY, THE MOST AFFORDABLE CITY IN THE U-S, AND THE BEST PLACE TO LIVE IN INDIANA.

ADDITIONAL ACCOLADES INCLUDE BEING THE 4TH BEST MINOR LEAGUE SPORTS CITY, THE 8TH BEST CITY FOR NEW COLLEGE GRADUATES TO START A CAREER, AND A TOP EMERGING HOUSING MARKET.

THESE NOTEWORTHY RECOGNITIONS FROM WALLETHUB, U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, AND REALTOR DOT COM HELP SET FORT WAYNE APART AS A CITY MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

OUR CITY IS EXPERIENCING POPULATION GROWTH AS WELL AND MORE BUSINESSES ARE CALLING FORT WAYNE HOME.

IN FACT, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GREATER FORT WAYNE, IN 2022 ALONE WE SAW PRIVATE INVESTMENTS TOTALING MORE THAN 585-MILLION DOLLARS.

EMPLOYERS THROUGHOUT FORT WAYNE ADDED 13-HUNDRED JOBS AND NEARLY 27-HUNDRED JOBS WERE RETAINED.

COMPANIES LIKE DO GOOD FOODS, PREMIER TRUCK, 3BG SUPPLY, DANA, AND FORT WAYNE METALS ARE EXAMPLES OF ORGANIZATIONS STARTING UP HERE OR EXPANDING EXISTING FACILITIES.

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT FORT WAYNE HAS ALSO BECOME A POINT OF DESTINATION.

OUR PARTNERS AT VISIT FORT WAYNE LEAD THE PROACTIVE EFFORTS TO BRING PEOPLE AND EVENTS TO OUR COMMUNITY.

WE SAW A RECORD YEAR IN 2022 IN HOTEL OCCUPANCY.

AND, OVER 6.5 MILLION PEOPLE SPENT TIME IN OUR CITY, WHICH LED TO 741-MILLION DOLLARS IN VISITOR SPENDING TO HELP BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

AS YOU CAN SEE, WE'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT HAVING UNIQUE QUALITY OF LIFE AMENITIES, PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS, AND BEING A WELCOMING COMMUNITY.

OUR FOCUS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS TO MAKE FORT WAYNE A PLACE THAT'S A BIT BETTER EACH DAY FOR LIVING, WORKING AND PLAYING.

THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT DUTIES IS TO BE GOOD STEWARDS OF TAXPAYER DOLLARS.

I'M PROUD TO SAY THAT FORT WAYNE'S FISCAL HEALTH IS AS STRONG AS IT'S EVER BEEN.

LEADERSHIP FROM OUR CONTROLLER'S OFFICE AND CITY COUNCIL HAVE PRODUCED A PROGRESSIVE, YET BALANCED BUDGET FOR THIS YEAR, AND HAS DEVELOPED SOUND FINANCIAL STRATEGIES FOR YEARS TO COME TO MEET THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND BUSINESSES.

WE'RE INVESTING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IN AREAS THAT YOU'VE TOLD US ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU – PUBLIC SAFETY, NEIGHBORHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE, AND PARKS.

IN FACT, OUR PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISIONS CONTINUE TO PERFORM AT A HIGH LEVEL.

THE WORK BEING DONE BY THE WOMEN AND MEN OF THE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS ARE SECOND TO NONE.

THEIR COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION TO PROTECTING ALL OF US IS EVIDENT EACH DAY.

VIOLENT CRIME IS DOWN FOR THE SECOND STRAIGHT YEAR.

WE SAW A 45 PERCENT DECREASE IN HOMICIDES, AN 83 PERCENT CLEARANCE RATE, AND OUR POLICE OFFICERS RESPONDED TO OVER 140-THOUSAND CALLS FOR SERVICE.

THIS YEAR, THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S 67TH RECRUIT CLASS WILL BRING STAFFING LEVELS UP TO 500 OFFICERS.

USING DRONES AS FIRST RESPONDERS WILL MOVE FROM THE TESTING PHASE TO OPERATIONAL.

AND, OUR NEW RIVER PATROL WILL START SEASONAL WORK ON THE RIVERS LATER THIS YEAR.

IN 2022, OUR FIREFIGHTERS RESPONDED TO MORE THAN 29-THOUSAND CALLS FOR SERVICE AND AVERAGED A RESPONSE TIME OF LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES.

CONSTRUCTION ON THE LIVE BURN TRAINING CENTER WAS COMPLETED AND TRAINING BEGAN.

I'M ALSO PROUD THAT IN 2022 THE FIRE DEPARTMENT GRADUATED ITS MOST DIVERSE RECRUIT CLASS IN NEARLY 40 YEARS.

THIS YEAR, THE FIRE DEPARTMENT WILL BEGIN AND GRADUATE THE 95TH RECRUIT CLASS WITH A GOAL OF HAVING 370 FIREFIGHTERS ON STAFF BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

FURTHERMORE, WE'LL SEE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW FIRE STATION 14 AT STATE BOULEVARD AND REED ROAD, ALONG WITH THE PURCHASE OF TWO NEW ENGINES.

INCIDENTALLY, ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL IS ALSO A VITAL PART OF OUR PUBLIC SAFETY TEAM.

THAT DEPARTMENT OVERSAW THE CARE OF MORE THAN 10-THOUSAND ANIMALS IN 2022.

AND, ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL GREW ITS FOSTER CARE PROGRAM, HAS AN

AMAZING CORPS OF VOLUNTEERS, AND WILL BE ABLE TO BEGIN ITS MUCH-NEEDED EXPANSION TO ENHANCE SERVICES AT THE HILLEGAS ROAD PROPERTY.

NOW, I'M PRETTY SURE MOST OF US RECOGNIZE THAT NEIGHBORHOODS CONTINUE TO BE THE BACKBONE OF FORT WAYNE.

WELL, WE'RE FORTUNATE TO HAVE STRONG AND VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS THAT ARE GROWING AND THRIVING.

AND ONE WAY WE HELP ENSURE ONGOING PROGRESS IS BY CONSTANTLY ADDRESSING INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS.

THERE WILL BE A RECORD 48-MILLION DOLLARS INVESTED THIS YEAR TO IMPROVE STREETS, ROADS, SIDEWALKS, ALLEYS, CURBS, BRIDGES, STREETLIGHTS, AND TRAILS.

THE PETTIT-RUDISILL, HARVESTER COMMUNITY, FAIRFIELD TERRACE/BELMONT, AND MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS WILL SEE COMPREHENSIVE STREET REPAIR WORK.

NEW SIDEWALKS WILL BE CONSTRUCTED ALONG TRIER ROAD AND GOEGLEIN ROAD.

AND, MOTORISTS WILL NOTICE MAJOR PROJECTS ON EAST STATE BOULEVARD, ST. JOE CENTER ROAD, AND COOK ROAD.

I'M ESPECIALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE COMPLETION OF THE FORT WAYNE VETERANS MEMORIAL BRIDGE.

THIS NEW AND INNOVATIVE STRUCTURE WILL HONOR ALL BRANCHES OF THE MILITARY AND BE A SIGNATURE PIECE IN OUR COMMUNITY FOR YEARS TO COME.

WE HOPE TO CUT THE RIBBON AND OPEN THE BRIDGE AROUND MEMORIAL DAY.

IT'S REMARKABLE THAT SINCE 2014, OUR PUBLIC WORKS DIVISION HAS INVESTED MORE THAN 250-MILLION DOLLARS IN NEIGHBORHOODS THROUGHOUT FORT WAYNE.

OUR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ALSO DEPEND ON OUR INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENJOY A GOOD TRAILS SYSTEM.

THE FORT WAYNE AREA TRAIL NETWORK NOW HAS 134 MILES, WITH 100 OF THOSE MILES INSIDE CITY LIMITS.

TRAIL PROJECTS THIS YEAR WILL FEATURE WORK ON COVINGTON ROAD, HANNA STREET, LIBERTY MILLS ROAD, LUDWIG ROAD, THE URBAN TRAIL DOWNTOWN, AND FRANKE PARK.

AND, IN ADDITION, WE'LL BID ANOTHER SECTION OF THE PUFFERBELLY TRAIL FROM WASHINGTON CENTER ROAD TO THE INTERSECTION OF LIMA ROAD AND ICE WAY.

I'D BE REMISS IF I DIDN'T MENTION THE POSITIVE TURNAROUND WE'VE EXPERIENCED WITH OUR NEW GARBAGE AND RECYCLING COLLECTION PROVIDER.

GFL HAS DONE A PHENOMENAL JOB SINCE STARTING LAST JULY.

BASIC SERVICES DO MATTER, AND I WANT TO THANK OUR SOLID WASTE STAFF AND THE RESIDENTS OF FORT WAYNE FOR WORKING TOGETHER.

AS WE VALUE THE VITAL WORK THAT'S VISIBLE EACH DAY, ANOTHER IMPORTANT DIVISION THAT'S PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SERVICES IS CITY UTILITIES, WITH MUCH OF THEIR WORK BEING DONE UNDERGROUND.

IN FACT, THEY'VE RECEIVED MORE AWARDS THAN ANY OTHER UTILITY IN THE ENTIRE STATE.

CLEAN, SAFE, AND AFFORDABLE DRINKING WATER, ALONG WITH HIGH-PERFORMING SEWER AND STORMWATER SYSTEMS, ASSISTS IN MAKING FORT WAYNE A DESIRABLE COMMUNITY.

PLANS CALL FOR 135-MILLION DOLLARS TO BE INVESTED IN NEIGHBORHOOD UTILITIES THIS YEAR.

GLENWOOD PARK, WILDWOOD PARK, EAST CENTRAL, WEST CENTRAL, AND MCKINNIE AVENUE WILL GET NEW WATER MAINS THIS YEAR.

THERE WILL BE A STORMWATER PROJECT IN THE WESTMOOR NEIGHBORHOOD AND DECATUR ROAD AREA, AND SEWER WORK WITH TUNNEL CONNECTIONS WILL HELP KEEP COMBINED SEWAGE OUT OF OUR RIVERS.

ALL OF THESE EFFORTS ARE ON TOP OF THE 110-MILLION DOLLARS THAT WAS INVESTED IN 2022.

CERTAINLY, ONE OF THE THINGS THAT MAKES FORT WAYNE A CITY LIKE NO OTHER IS OUR PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT.

WE COMPLETED OVER 75 PROJECTS IN 2022, INCLUDING THE RESTORATION OF

FOSTER PARK PAVILION NUMBER 3 AND THE ADDITION OF 30 PICKLEBALL COURTS CITYWIDE.

THERE WILL BE ANOTHER 3-MILLION DOLLARS IN IMPROVEMENTS TO PARKS THIS YEAR.

WE'LL HAVE VARIOUS PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION WORK AT BUCKNER, FRANKLIN, AND SHOAFF PARKS, JUST TO NAME A FEW.

ONE OF MY FAVORITE PROJECTS WILL LAUNCH THIS YEAR – THE FRANKE PARK RENAISSANCE INITIATIVE.

WE'LL EMBARK ON THE FIRST PHASE OF A MASTER PLAN TO RESTORE AND RENOVATE FORT WAYNE'S LARGEST PARK.

SOME OF THE FEATURES WILL INCLUDE AN ADDITIONAL ENTRANCE OFF GOSHEN AVENUE, AND A STATE-OF-THE-ART, YEAR-ROUND PAVILION.

FRIENDS, WE WOULDN'T BE THE CITY WE ARE TODAY WITHOUT THE ATTENTION WE'VE GIVEN TO OUR DOWNTOWN – THE HEART OF FORT WAYNE.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH SPEAKS VOLUMES ABOUT OUR DESIRE TO RAISE THE BAR AND AIM HIGH, AND WE'RE SEEING RESULTS.

ONE OF THE MOST NOTICEABLE EXAMPLES IS WHAT'S HAPPENING ALONG OUR RIVERFRONT.

I CONTINUE TO BE AMAZED AND ENCOURAGED BY THE ONGOING INTEREST AND SUPPORT AS SEVERAL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS ARE COMING TO FRUITION.

THE PARKING GARAGE IS OPEN ON THE NEARLY 90-MILLION DOLLAR RIVERFRONT AT PROMENADE PARK DEVELOPMENT.

AND, A NUMBER OF RESIDENTS HAVE ALREADY MOVED INTO THE LIVING SPACES THERE.

IN ADDITION, OFFICE SPACE COMPLETION WITH SWISS RE AS ITS ANCHOR TENANT IS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH.

PROGRESS WILL ALSO BE EVIDENT THIS YEAR WITH CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECOND PHASE OF RIVERFRONT PUBLIC SPACE BETWEEN PROMENADE AND HEADWATERS PARKS.

MOREOVER, ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE RIVER, PLANS CALL FOR AN

EXTENSION OF THE ELEVATED TREE CANOPY TRAIL, BOAT DOCKS FOR PRIVATE WATERCRAFT, A UNIVERSALLY-ACCESSIBLE BOULDERING MOUND, HAMMOCK GROVE, AND WALKING TRAILS.

THE FORMER SCHAAB METAL BUILDING ON HARRISON STREET WILL SEE AN ADAPTIVE REUSE ADJACENT TO OUR RIVERFRONT PUBLIC SPACE PROJECT.

AND, MORE BREWING WILL BECOME THE FIRST PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT ON THE NORTH RIVER SITE WITH A RESTAURANT AND BREWERY.

FURTHERMORE, WE NOW OWN THE PEPSI DISTRIBUTION CENTER ON HARRISON STREET FOR FUTURE REDEVELOPMENT ALONG THE RIVERFRONT.

CONSTRUCTION ON THE LOFTS AT HEADWATERS PARK AT CLINTON AND SUPERIOR STREETS IS SET TO BEGIN NEXT MONTH.

THIS DEVELOPMENT WILL FEATURE APARTMENTS, TOWNHOMES, A PARKING GARAGE, AND OFFICE AND RETAIL SPACE.

CONTINUING WITH OUR DOWNTOWN RENEWAL, WE HAVE THE ASHBERRY DEVELOPMENT, WHICH WILL SERVE AS THE CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS FOR STAR FINANCIAL BANK. IT WILL OPEN IN THE 4TH QUARTER OF THIS YEAR.

THIS 43-MILLION DOLLAR, SEVEN-STORY MIXED-USE PROJECT ALONG MAIN STREET WILL ALSO HAVE COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL SPACE AND PUBLIC PARKING.

DOWN THE STREET FROM THERE IS THE PEARL, A MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT LED BY SURACK ENTERPRISES.

THIS 50-MILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT WILL INCLUDE COMMERCIAL AND EVENT SPACE AS WELL AS HOUSING.

WE ANTICIPATE COMPLETION IN LATE 2024.

A BILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF INVESTMENTS HAS OCCURRED IN OUR DOWNTON IN THE LAST DECADE, AND WE'LL EASILY SURPASS ANOTHER BILLION DOLLARS OF PROJECTS OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS.

A REDEVELOPMENT ENDEAVOR THAT'S GENERATING NATIONAL EXPOSURE IS ELECTRIC WORKS.

THE WEST CAMPUS IS OPEN COVERING 10 BUILDINGS AND MORE THAN 740-THOUSAND SQUARE FEET.

HIGHLIGHTS THERE INCLUDE FORT WAYNE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS' AMP LAB, THE WORLD HEADQUARTERS OF DO IT BEST, AND THE UNION STREET MARKET, THE REGION'S FIRST FOOD HALL AND PUBLIC MARKET.

FURTHERMORE, THERE ARE HEALTH CARE OFFERINGS, EVENT SPACE, AND SEVERAL OTHER ORGANIZATIONS' OFFICES.

THE ESTIMATED ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ELECTRIC WORKS IS NEARLY 400-MILLION DOLLARS AND WILL SUPPORT THREE-THOUSAND JOBS.

WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO FUTURE PHASES AND ADDITIONAL AMENITIES FOR THE COMMUNITY TO ENJOY.

I'M ALSO VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT WHAT WE'RE SEEING TAKE PLACE IN SOUTHEAST FORT WAYNE.

VERY SOON, WE'LL BEGIN CONSTRUCTION ON A FULL-SERVICE GROCERY STORE ON PONTIAC STREET TO PROVIDE HEALTHY AND AFFORDABLE FOOD OPTIONS FOR RESIDENTS.

PARKVIEW REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER AND AFFILIATES IS OUR COMMUNITY PARTNER ON THIS PROJECT, AND PARKVIEW'S VENDOR PARTNER, SODEXO, WILL MANAGE STORE OPERATIONS.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WILL BE PART OF THE EFFORTS TO ENSURE RESIDENTS AND NEIGHBORHOODS CONTINUE TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY.

WE'RE PROJECTING THE STORE WILL OPEN THIS FALL.

STARBUCKS OPENED AT SOUTHTOWN CENTRE LAST NOVEMBER, AND WE'RE PROACTIVELY LOOKING AT ADDITIONAL HOSPITALITY OFFERINGS.

IN FACT, WE HAVE A PURCHASE AGREEMENT FOR A CULVER'S RESTAURANT TO GO IN AT SOUTHTOWN CENTRE.

THE FIRST MARKET RATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST FORT WAYNE IN MORE THAN 30 YEARS WILL ALSO START THIS YEAR.

ROOSEVELT RESERVES NEAR TILLMAN AND HESSEN CASSEL ROADS WILL PROVIDE NEEDED HOUSING OPTIONS FOR RESIDENTS.

ON TOP OF THAT, WE RECENTLY BROKE GROUND ON VILLAGE PREMIER.

THIS MULTI-PHASE, 55-MILLION DOLLAR DEVELOPMENT WILL TRANSFORM MORE THAN 20 ACRES OF LAND NEAR SOUTH ANTHONY BOULEVARD AND

MCKINNIE AVENUE INTO A VIBRANT, WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOOD.

THERE WILL BE APARTMENTS, SINGLE FAMILY HOMES, DAYCARE, AND A HEALTH CLINIC.

PLACEMAKING AND GATHERING SPACE PROJECTS RESULTED IN THE RESTORATION OF POWELL PARK, AND MCKINNIE COMMONS IS NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

IN A KEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WIN, ABF FREIGHT OPENED A NEARLY FIVE-MILLION DOLLAR FACILITY ON ADAMS CENTER ROAD AND RETAINED 28 JOBS.

WE'RE A PEOPLE-FOCUSED COMMUNITY, TOO.

WE CARE ABOUT ONE ANOTHER.

THAT'S CLEAR THROUGH THE WORK OF OUR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION.

THE OFFICE OF HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES, NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AND ACTIVATION, AND PLANNING AND POLICY ALL HAVE CRITICAL FUNCTIONS THAT DIRECTLY RELATE TO FORT WAYNE'S UNPRECEDENTED MOMENTUM.

FOR INSTANCE, WE WILL SOON LAUNCH A COMMUNITY PLAN TO INCREASE SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING, EXPAND HOMELESS RESPONSE SERVICES AND HELP PREVENT HOMELESSNESS BEFORE IT BEGINS.

FORT WAYNE'S ONGOING SUCCESS HAS A LOT TO DO WITH HOW OUR ARTS AND CULTURAL SCENE CONTINUES TO THRIVE, TOO.

THE COLLECTIVE WORK OF ARTS UNITED, THE PUBLIC ART COMMISSION, AND MANY OTHERS HELPS MAKE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR EVERYONE.

WE KNOW AS CITIES COMPETE FOR PEOPLE AND JOBS, HOW A COMMUNITY VALUES AND APPRECIATES ART MATTERS.

TO THAT POINT, THE LOCAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS HAVE RECENTLY COME TOGETHER TO INVEST IN THE MODERNIZATION AND RENOVATION OF THE ICONIC ARTS UNITED CENTER.

WHILE THERE ARE ADDITIONAL FUNDS THAT NEED TO BE RAISED, CONSTRUCTION IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN NEXT YEAR.

WE'RE ALSO A COMMUNITY COMMITTED TO BUILDING EACH OTHER UP.

THAT'S EVIDENT THROUGH THE NATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED FORT WAYNE UNITED INITIATIVE, A PROGRAM THAT'S GEARED TOWARD IMPROVING THE LIVES OF ALL RESIDENTS, BUT WITH A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON YOUNG BLACK MEN AND BOYS.

FOR EXAMPLE, WE'RE TEACHING LIFE SKILLS AND INCREASING POSITIVE INTERACTIONS WITH PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL THROUGH REAL-LIFE SIMULATIONS AND HANDS-ON TRAINING, EDUCATION, AND EMPOWERMENT.

ADDITIONALLY, FORT WAYNE UNITED'S EXPANSION INCLUDES UNITED FRONT, WHICH IN 2022 CELEBRATED TWO YEARS OF ENGAGING GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS LEADERS IN PRACTICAL WAYS OF DEALING WITH EQUITY AND INCLUSION.

WE ALSO HAVE THE TEN POINT COALITION THAT'S BEEN IN THE OXFORD NEIGHBORHOOD FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS.

THE COALITION ENGAGES, PROMOTES PEACE, AND CONNECTS RESIDENTS WITH NEEDED SERVICES.

ONE OF THE MOST TANGIBLE OUTCOMES OF THIS INITIATIVE HAS BEEN THE DECREASE IN CRIME AND INCREASE OF HOPE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

TRUST, RESPECT, AND DEMONSTRATING THAT WE TRULY CARE ABOUT PEOPLE OF COLOR IN FORT WAYNE ARE THE CORNERSTONES OF FORT WAYNE UNITED AND ITS PROGRAMS.

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO A NUMBER OF NEW INITIATIVES IN 2023 AS WELL.

IN PARTICULAR, I'M INTERESTED IN OUR PROJECT TO RELOCATE A NUMBER OF CITY FUNCTIONS TO MAXIMIZE RESOURCES AND EFFICIENCIES FOR THE PUBLIC WORKS AND PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISIONS.

WE'VE PURCHASED THREE BUILDINGS AT THE AVENUE OF AUTOS ON ILLINOIS ROAD TO PROVIDE MORE MODERN OFFERINGS FOR OUR FLEET SERVICES, TRAFFIC OPERATIONS, AND OUR RADIO SHOP.

WE'RE SAVING TAXPAYERS NEARLY 20-MILLION DOLLARS THROUGH THIS PLAN TO PURCHASE THE PROPERTIES AND MAKE IMPROVEMENTS TO FIT OUR NEEDS VERSUS BUILDING NEW STRUCTURES.

I ALSO MEET WITH SMALL AND LARGE BUSINESSES ON A REGULAR BASIS TO GET A FEEL FOR HOW THINGS ARE GOING AND WHERE CITY GOVERNMENT CAN HELP.

AS A RESULT, THIS FALL, OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR WILL ORGANIZE A BUSINESS SYMPOSIUM.

THIS WILL ASSIST CURRENT AND FUTURE BUSINESS OWNERS TO LEARN AND GROW IN THE LEGAL, MARKETING, AND FINANCIAL PIECES OF HAVING A SUCCESSFUL AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS.

THE SYMPOSIUM IS IN COLLABORATION WITH OUR SUMMIT CITY ENTREPRENEURIAL AND ENTERPRISE DISTRICT.

ANOTHER ISSUE I'M HEARING ABOUT AS WELL IS THE NEED FOR AVAILABLE, AFFORDABLE, AND QUALITY CHILDCARE.

SO, MY STAFF WILL BE PART OF A COALITION-BUILDING EFFORT TO ADDRESS THIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BARRIER.

ALL OF THIS IS A CONCENTRATED EFFORT TO GAIN AND RETAIN JOBS AND HAVE A SKILLED WORKFORCE.

I WANT FORT WAYNE TO BE HITTING ON ALL CYLINDERS, BUT I CONTINUE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF MANY OF OUR RESIDENTS.

SO, IN THE COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS, I'LL BE CONVENING A GROUP OF PROFESSIONALS TO TRY TO GET A BETTER HANDLE ON HOW WE REACH PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE AND GET THEM THE HELP THEY NEED.

AS WE LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER, I ALSO WANT US TO BE MINDFUL OF HOW WE CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

MY ADMINISTRATION IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF ACTIVITIES TO POSITION FORT WAYNE AS AN EFFICIENT ENERGY CONSUMER AND IMPLEMENTOR OF PROGRAMS TO REDUCE OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT.

FOR INSTANCE, THE USE OF RENEWABLE SOLAR ENERGY AT OUR WATER AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES IS SAVING OUR COMMUNITY 725-THOUSAND DOLLARS A YEAR.

AND, OUR CITY UTILITIES' NEW GREASE COOPERATIVE WITH PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS WILL RESULT IN GREASE BEING COLLECTED AND ALSO USED FOR ENERGY PRODUCTION.

FURTHERMORE, WE'LL BE EXPLORING THE USE OF SOLAR POWER AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS AT ALL CITY-OWNED BUILDINGS.

AND, WE'LL CONTINUE TO CONVERT STREETLIGHTS TO L-E-D, UTILIZE MORE

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND EXPAND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS.

AND NOW, I'LL BE ASKING CITY COUNCIL TO SET ASIDE 250-THOUSAND DOLLARS ANNUALLY TO HELP ENSURE OUR NEW CLIMATE ACTION PLAN GETS IMPLEMENTED IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE.

IT IS A VENTURE THAT'S GEARED TOWARD ADDITIONAL COMMON SENSE PRACTICES THAT WILL RESULT IN LESS ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND SAVE MONEY FOR TAXPAYERS.

I WANT TO SPEAK FROM THE HEART FOR A MOMENT.

AS MANY OF YOU MAY KNOW, MY WIFE, CINDY, IS BATTLING PANCREATIC CANCER.

IT WAS A DEVASTATING BLOW TO HER, MYSELF, AND OUR ENTIRE FAMILY WHEN WE RECEIVED THE DIAGNOSIS.

CINDY IS MY BEST FRIEND, MY WIFE OF 47 YEARS, A WONDERFUL MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER, AND MY ROCK.

PLEASE CONTINUE PRAYING FOR HER AS SHE WAGES A COURAGEOUS FIGHT AGAINST THIS DISEASE.

{CINDY IS WITH US TODAY. HONEY, WILL YOU PLEASE STAND TO BE RECOGNIZED. I LOVE YOU.}

THOUGH CINDY AND I ARE EXPERIENCING PAIN AND UNCERTAIN TIME IN OUR PERSONAL LIFE, I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN I AM RIGHT NOW ABOUT FORT WAYNE.

THE STATE OF OUR CITY IS STRONG.

BUT WE CAN'T STOP THIS MOMENTUM.

WE'VE WORKED TOO HARD TO EARN OUR PLACE AS A RESPECTED LEADER IN THE MIDWEST AND NATIONALLY.

WE MUST CONTINUE TO SHOW LEADERSHIP AND BE BOLD TO POSITION FORT WAYNE FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE SUCCESS.

FRIENDS, LET'S CONTINUE THIS JOURNEY TOGETHER.

OUR TIME IS NOW.

LET'S CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER AND MAKE THIS YEAR AND BEYOND THE VERY BEST.

NOVELIST LOUIS L'AMOUR ONCE SAID, THERE WILL COME A TIME WHEN YOU THINK EVERYTHING IS FINISHED. THAT WILL BE THE BEGINNING.

TODAY, WE'VE BEEN REMINDED WHY FORT WAYNE IS A CITY LIKE NO OTHER.

GOD BLESS YOU AND GOD BLESS THE CITY OF FORT WAYNE.

THANK YOU.