

MAYOR TOM HENRY'S 2019 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

THANK YOU, SHERIFF GLADIEUX, FOR THAT WARM INTRODUCTION.

I VALUE AND APPRECIATE OUR FRIENDSHIP.

THANK YOU AS WELL FOR BEING AN OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SERVANT AND A TRUSTED PARTNER IN OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS.

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

THE OPTIMISM AND POSITIVE MOMENTUM WE'RE EXPERIENCING ARE CLEAR INDICATIONS OF WHY FORT WAYNE'S FUTURE IS NOW.

NEVER BEFORE HAVE I WITNESSED THE CONFIDENCE AND EXCITEMENT WE'RE CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING IN OUR CITY.

IT'S DEFINITELY OUR TIME.

FOR EXAMPLE, IN 2018 ALONE, WE WERE NAMED A TOP CITY TO MOVE TO, THE BEST PLACE IN INDIANA TO LIVE, THE LOWEST COST OF LIVING CITY FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW, THE MOST AFFORDABLE CITY FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP, AND ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S BEST-RUN CITIES.

THINGS ARE GOING WELL IN FORT WAYNE.

WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK, AND THE RESULTS ARE EVIDENT.

JUST LOOK AT THE RIVERFRONT.

WE'RE NEARING THE COMPLETION OF PHASE ONE.

IN FACT, I'M PLEASED TO REPORT THAT PROMENADE PARK WILL OPEN ON JUNE 21ST.

THIS WORLD-CLASS ATTRACTION WILL HAVE AND CERTAINLY DESERVES A SPECTACULAR THREE-DAY GRAND OPENING.

YOU'RE GOING TO EXPERIENCE A FLOATING BAND PERFORMANCE, THREE

COMMUNITY ART PROJECTS, A LIGHTED BOAT PARADE, A BUTTERFLY RELEASE, AND FREE BOAT RIDES.

PLAN NOW TO JOIN US. IT'S GOING TO BE A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EVENT.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO STOP THERE, THOUGH.

WE'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT MAKING RIVERFRONT FORT WAYNE THE PLACE ALL OF YOU HAVE TOLD US YOU WANT IT TO BE.

SO, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF OUR PLANNING DEPARTMENT AND LAND COLLECTIVE, WE'RE WORKING ON PHASES TWO AND THREE AS WE PLAN AND DESIGN FOR MORE PUBLIC SPACES AND IMPROVEMENTS.

FOR INSTANCE, THANKS TO BUD HALL, WE'LL BE ENJOYING A NEW HALL'S RESTAURANT AS PART OF THE RIVERFRONT DISTRICT.

HIS MOVE AND RESTORATION OF THE FORMER CAMBRAY BUILDING HONORS HISTORY AND LOOKS TOWARD THE FUTURE.

OTHER LARGE PRIVATE INVESTMENTS ARE ALSO COMING TOGETHER.

I'M CONFIDENT THAT IN 2019 WE'RE GOING TO SEE AT LEAST ONE ADDITIONAL MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT AND A NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS TAKE SHAPE IN DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE.

AND NEARBY, THE LANDING CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF MY FAVORITE PROJECTS.

I HOPE YOU'VE SEEN THE PROGRESS BEING MADE ON THIS OVER 30-MILLION DOLLAR REDEVELOPMENT.

THIS INITIATIVE WILL CERTAINLY COMPLEMENT RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT AND WILL OPEN LATER THIS YEAR WITH SEVERAL MIXED-USE OFFERINGS.

AND, DON'T FORGET ABOUT SUPERIOR LOFTS, WHICH IS NOW OPEN AND SITS ALONG OUR RIVERFRONT WITH 72 APARTMENTS AS AN ADAPTIVE RE-USE OF A 1905 BUILDING.

ANOTHER AREA WITH UNLIMITED POTENTIAL IS AT NORTH RIVER.

HAVING CONTROL OF THIS RIVERFRONT PROPERTY, AS WE DO, WILL CERTAINLY POSITION US FOR FUTURE PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT.

NORTH RIVER IS ALSO AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE PLANNING AND DESIGN WORK WITH RIVERFRONT PHASES TWO AND THREE TO HELP US BETTER GAUGE THE BEST FIT FOR NEXT STEPS.

AND, THERE'S EVEN MORE DEVELOPMENT TO LOOK FORWARD TO.

OUR FUTURE IS NOW AT ELECTRIC WORKS.

IT'S ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST UNIQUE INITIATIVES WE'VE EVER SEEN IN FORT WAYNE.

I CONTINUE TO BE ENCOURAGED BY THE PROGRESS WE'RE MAKING.

MY ADMINISTRATION AND ALL OF OUR PARTNERS AT CITY COUNCIL, ALLEN COUNTY GOVERNMENT, THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BOARD, FORT WAYNE REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, AND THE BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS HAD ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP ROLES IN SECURING THE NECESSARY PUBLIC FUNDING FOR THE PROJECT.

SEVERAL RESPECTED COMPANIES AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE ALREADY ON BOARD WITH LETTERS OF INTENT TO UTILIZE SPACE ON THE CAMPUS.

AS R-T-M VENTURES CONTINUES ITS WORK TO FINALIZE PRIVATE FINANCING AND LEASING COMMITMENTS, THE PUBLIC AND I LOOK FORWARD WITH OPTIMISM.

YET ANOTHER PROJECT THAT CONTINUES TO SHINE IS THE RENOVATED CLYDE THEATRE.

THE POPULARITY OF THE CLYDE HAS BEEN A TREMENDOUS DRIVER OF REBIRTH AND EXCITEMENT IN THE QUIMBY VILLAGE AREA.

I'D BE REMISS IF I DIDN'T ACKNOWLEDGE AND THANK THE FORT WAYNE REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AND REDEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT AS THEY GUIDE VITAL PROJECTS THAT WILL HAVE A LASTING IMPACT.

ANOTHER ONE OF OUR VALUED PARTNERS IS VISIT FORT WAYNE AS THEY HELP

US WELCOME NEARLY SIX-AND-A-HALF MILLION GUESTS ANNUALLY.

THAT'S A 741-MILLION DOLLAR BOOST TO OUR LOCAL ECONOMY AND REPRESENTS AN ANNUAL GROWTH RATE OF THREE-POINT-SIX PERCENT.

AND, MORE THAN 14-THOUSAND JOBS IN OUR CITY ARE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE VISITOR AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY.

THE MARKETING EFFORTS OF VISIT FORT WAYNE AND THE COLLABORATION AMONG SO MANY OF YOU HAVE MADE US A DESIRABLE LOCATION.

IT'S NO COINCIDENCE THAT MORE AND MORE CONVENTIONS WANT TO BE RIGHT HERE AT THE GRAND WAYNE CENTER.

HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATES ARE ALSO AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH.

RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET, YOU'LL NOTICE THE NEW HAMPTON INN AND SUITES BY HILTON UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

THE HOTEL WILL HAVE 136 ROOMS, WITH MORE THAN 25 PERCENT BEING OVERSIZED SUITES.

AND, ALL GUESTROOMS WILL OFFER DIRECT VIEWS OF PARKVIEW FIELD OR THE DOWNTOWN SKYLINE.

IT'S ON SCHEDULE TO OPEN IN JULY AND WILL CERTAINLY BE A GREAT ADDITION TO OUR DOWNTOWN.

AND, AT MAIN AND HARRISON STREETS WILL BE THE BOUTIQUE HOTEL LED BY PROVENANCE HOTELS AND BARBARA BAEKGAARD.

WE PLAN TO BREAK GROUND IN MAY ON THIS UNIQUE PROJECT, WHICH WILL HELP MEET A NEED IN OUR THRIVING CITY.

YOU KNOW, WE'RE FORTUNATE TO LIVE IN A CITY THAT HAS GREAT BUSINESSMEN AND WOMEN WHO CARE ABOUT ONE ANOTHER AND WANT WHAT'S BEST FOR OUR COMMUNITY TO GROW AND PROSPER.

WE'RE A CITY THAT'S COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT BUSINESSES ARE SUCCESSFUL TODAY AND RECOGNIZE THAT THEIR TOMORROWS START WITH

FRESH PERSPECTIVES AND POSITIVE ATTITUDES.

GREG LEFFLER AND GREG LEFFLER, JUNIOR, ARE DOING JUST THAT AT FIRST GEAR.

IT'S A SUCCESSFUL SMALL BUSINESS OF AROUND 30 EMPLOYEES THAT'S HAD TWO RECENT EXPANSIONS.

THEY SPECIALIZE IN GEAR MANUFACTURING FOR AEROSPACE, MEDICAL, DEFENSE, RACING, FOOD, AND AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRIES.

THE LEFFLER'S ARE WITH US TODAY.

WOULD YOU PLEASE STAND TO BE RECOGNIZED.

SMALL BUSINESSES ARE CRITICAL TO FORT WAYNE. KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK.

PROACTIVE BUSINESS MODELS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

THEY AFFECT HOW A CITY OPERATES, HOW RESIDENTS FEEL ABOUT THEMSELVES, AND HOW A COMMUNITY CAN COME TOGETHER TO BE A POINT OF DESTINATION.

FOR EXAMPLE, WE'VE ALSO WELCOMED A NEW CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS TO OUR DOWNTOWN.

SHINDIGZ IS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S LEADING ONLINE AND CATALOG RETAILERS OF PARTY SUPPLIES, DECORATIONS AND FAVORS.

THEY'RE A COMPANY THAT'S BEEN PART OF NORTHEAST INDIANA FOR MORE THAN 90 YEARS, AND NOW THEY EXPECT TO ADD JOBS AT THEIR NEW LOCATION IN THE HEART OF OUR CITY.

THIS IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE TREMENDOUS BUSINESS GROWTH AND SUCCESS WE'RE SEEING IN OUR CITY.

SHEP AND WENDY MOYLE OF SHINDIGZ HAVE JOINED US TODAY.

PLEASE STAND SO WE CAN RECOGNIZE BOTH OF YOU.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO FORT WAYNE AND NORTHEAST INDIANA.

INCIDENTALLY, SHINDIGZ IS NEXT DOOR TO ANOTHER ONE OF OUR MAJOR DOWNTOWN SUCCESS STORIES IN 2018.

THE RECENT OPENING OF THE NEW SKYLINE TOWER FEATURES APARTMENTS, A RUTH'S CHRIS STEAK HOUSE, AND FIRST MERCHANTS BANK.

FRIENDS, I CAN TELL YOU WE HAD A RECORD YEAR OF BUSINESS INVESTMENTS IN 2018.

THERE WERE 33 EXPANSIONS AND RELOCATIONS.

COMPANIES LIKE SWEETWATER, MIDWEST SERVICE AND SUPPLY, AND AARDVARK PAPER STRAWS.

THESE RECORD INVESTMENTS RESULTED IN 336-MILLION DOLLARS IN PRIVATE INVESTMENT, 115-MILLION DOLLARS IN NEW ANNUAL PAYROLL, AND NEARLY 25-HUNDRED NEW JOB COMMITMENTS.

AND, OUR UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS NOW DOWN TO THREE AND A HALF PERCENT.

FORT WAYNE'S VIBRANCY AND POSITIVE BUSINESS CLIMATE ARE ATTRACTING OUT-OF-STATE INVESTMENTS, TOO.

WE RECENTLY WELCOMED RURAL SOURCING TO FORT WAYNE.

A LEADER IN TECHNOLOGY OUTSOURCING SERVICES, THEY PLAN TO CREATE UP TO 130 NEW, HIGH-WAGE JOBS.

THIS INVESTMENT WILL ALLOW US TO KEEP OUR HIGHLY SKILLED WORKFORCE RIGHT HERE AT HOME AND ATTRACT NEW TALENT TO FORT WAYNE.

RURAL SOURCING C-E-O MONTY HAMILTON TRAVELED FROM ATLANTA TO BE WITH US TODAY.

MONTY, WOULD YOU PLEASE STAND SO WE CAN WELCOME YOU TO FORT WAYNE AND THANK YOU FOR BELIEVING IN OUR COMMUNITY.

WE RECOGNIZE THAT DEVELOPING CAREERS IN MONTY'S SECTOR AS WELL AS OTHERS WILL REQUIRE AN EVEN MORE AGGRESSIVE AND PROACTIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATORS THROUGHOUT FORT WAYNE.

SPEAKING OF INVESTMENTS, GET READY FOR ANOTHER RECORD YEAR OF INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS.

THERE WILL BE AN ADDITIONAL 31-MILLION DOLLARS IN IMPROVEMENTS.

SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE A NEW ROUNDABOUT AT THE FIVE POINTS INTERSECTION AND THE CONTINUATION OF THE STATE BOULEVARD REALIGNMENT.

THERE WILL BE CONCRETE STREET PROJECTS IN ABOITE MEADOWS, WOODHURST, AND GREATER MCMILLEN PARK, JUST TO NAME A FEW.

AND IN THE PETTIT-RUDISILL NEIGHBORHOOD, THERE WILL BE RESURFACING, ALLEY RECONSTRUCTION, AND SIDEWALK WORK.

130-MILLION DOLLARS OF WORK IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS SHOWS THAT NEIGHBORHOODS, THE BACKBONE OF FORT WAYNE, ARE A TOP PRIORITY.

AS PART OF OUR ONGOING COMMITMENT TO NEIGHBORHOODS, TODAY, I'M ANNOUNCING THAT LATER THIS YEAR, I'LL BE PROPOSING TO CITY COUNCIL A NEWLY REVISED PLAN FOR RESIDENTIAL TAX ABATEMENT.

STATE LAW ALLOWS FOR THIS INITIATIVE, AND I WOULD LIKE TO ASK COUNCIL FOR POSITIVE CONSIDERATION OF THIS NEIGHBORHOOD INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY.

TRAIL EXPANSION EFFORTS WILL ALSO CONTINUE WITH ANOTHER SIX MILES PLANNED TO ENHANCE OUR CURRENT NETWORK OF MORE THAN 100 MILES OF TRAILS.

SOME OF THOSE HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE EXTENSIONS ALONG ARDMORE AVENUE, HANNA STREET, AND LAKE AVENUE.

IN ADDITION, IT'S CRUCIAL THAT WE PROVIDE ALL OF YOU WITH RELIABLE AND

AFFORDABLE WATER AND SEWER SERVICES.

IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS ALONE IN 2018, WE INVESTED OVER 116-MILLION DOLLARS IN IMPROVEMENTS.

THIS WORK RESULTED IN THE CREATION AND SUPPORT OF MORE THAN THREE-THOUSAND JOBS.

IN 2019, WE'VE BUDGETED ANOTHER 115-MILLION DOLLARS, WHICH WILL AGAIN RESULT IN THOUSANDS OF JOBS AND DOZENS OF PROJECTS.

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THE DEEP ROCK TUNNEL PROJECT IS WELL UNDERWAY AS THE LARGEST CLEAN WATER ENHANCEMENT IN THE CITY'S HISTORY.

IT'S NO WONDER CITY UTILITIES CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE MOST AWARDED UTILITIES IN INDIANA.

AND, IT'S A NATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED UTILITY AS WELL, RECEIVING THE PRESTIGIOUS "UTILITY OF THE FUTURE" AWARD.

ANOTHER ESSENTIAL SERVICE WE PROVIDE FOR YOU IS THROUGH OUR PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISIONS.

YOUR SAFETY HAS BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF MY ADMINISTRATION.

IT'S ENCOURAGING TO SEE SO MANY OF OUR UNIFORMED PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL HERE TODAY.

WITH THEIR HELP, I CAN ASSURE YOU WE LIVE IN A SAFE CITY.

OVERALL CRIME IS DOWN 15 PERCENT.

WE CAN'T SHY AWAY FROM THE FACT, THOUGH, THAT THERE WAS A SPIKE IN THE NUMBER OF HOMICIDES IN 2018.

I KNOW POLICE CHIEF STEVE REED AND THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE FORT WAYNE POLICE DEPARTMENT WORK TIRELESSLY TO COMBAT THIS CRIMINAL ELEMENT.

WE'RE ADDING MORE RESOURCES, STAFF, AND TECHNOLOGY TO THE HOMICIDE UNIT TO ADDRESS VIOLENT CRIMES.

AND, MORE PERSONNEL IN THE VICE AND NARCOTICS DIVISION WILL HELP IN EFFORTS TO REDUCE THE PROLIFERATION OF DRUGS IN OUR COMMUNITY.

CLEARLY, DRUG ADDICTION IS ANOTHER CHALLENGE WE CONTINUE TO BATTLE.

THROUGH ENFORCEMENT, EDUCATION, AND TREATMENT, WE'RE PARTNERING WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES TO MAKE SURE RESIDENTS GET THE HELP THEY NEED.

AND, IN ADDITION, OUR PARTICIPATION IN A LAWSUIT AGAINST OPIOID DISTRIBUTORS SENDS A POWERFUL MESSAGE THAT WE'RE DOING ALL WE CAN TO REDUCE THE NEGATIVE IMPACT DRUGS HAVE ON OUR RESIDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY.

AS WE CONTINUE OUR COMMITMENT TO BEING THE SAFEST CITY POSSIBLE, MY ADMINISTRATION HAS ALSO PARTNERED WITH THE NEW TENPOINT COALITION THROUGH FORT WAYNE UNITED.

THE TENPOINT COALITION IS FOCUSED ON ADDRESSING YOUTH GUN VIOLENCE, EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND HOUSING.

THEY'RE CURRENTLY WORKING IN THE OXFORD NEIGHBORHOOD TO IMPROVE LIFE OUTCOMES AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY PRIDE.

THE TENPOINT COALITION FOOT PATROL MEMBERS ARE OUT IN THE COMMUNITY ALMOST EVERY NIGHT, AND THEY'RE IN THE AUDIENCE TODAY.

WILL THE TEAM MEMBERS PLEASE STAND.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION TO MAKING A MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE.

I'M ALSO IMPRESSED WITH THE EFFORTS OF THE FORT WAYNE FIRE DEPARTMENT UNDER THE DIRECTION OF CHIEF ERIC LAHEY.

WE'VE MADE POSITIVE STRIDES WITH EQUIPMENT UPGRADES, NEW TECHNOLOGY, AND ADDITIONAL TRAINING.

WE'RE LEADING THE WAY IN FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES, LIFE-SAVING PRACTICES, AND PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION.

IN ADDITION, OUR POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS HAVE ACADEMY CLASSES THAT STARTED LAST WEEK.

OUR RECRUITS ARE OFF TO A POSITIVE START AS WE ADD 22 POLICE OFFICERS AND 11 FIREFIGHTERS.

AN INTEGRAL PART OF PUBLIC SAFETY IS ALSO ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL.

JUST LAST YEAR, THEY SET A RECORD FOR PET ADOPTIONS.

AND, OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES, THEY'VE BECOME A NATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED LEADER IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ANIMALS.

FORT WAYNE CERTAINLY WOULDN'T BE WHAT IT IS TODAY WITHOUT OUR AWARD-WINNING PARK SYSTEM.

THERE WERE OVER 43 PROJECTS COMPLETED LAST YEAR.

INITIATIVES LIKE THE SALOMON FARM LEARNING CENTER EXPANSION AND THE PACKARD PARK FUTSAL COURTS NAMED AFTER FORT WAYNE'S VERY OWN INTERNATIONAL SOCCER STAR, DAMARCUS BEASLEY.

AND IN 2019, I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE BOTANICAL CONNECTOR PROJECT, LINKING OUR CONSERVATORY TO THE EMBASSY THEATRE.

OUR FRANKE PARK MASTER PLAN WILL PROVIDE FOR A NEW, GRAND ENTRANCE INTO THE PARK, AND THERE WILL BE ADDITIONAL RENOVATIONS TO FOSTER PARK PAVILION NUMBER 3.

THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND PLACES IS CRITICAL IN OUR ABILITY TO BE A SUCCESSFUL AND CARING CITY NOW AND IN THE FUTURE. FOR INSTANCE, THANKS TO NEW MARKETS TAX CREDITS, THE YOUTH IN OUR COMMUNITY WILL BENEFIT FROM THE NEW STATE-OF-THE ART BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS FACILITY BEING BUILT ON FAIRFIELD AVENUE.

THESE TAX CREDITS HAVE ALSO MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE NEW BYRON HEALTH CENTER CAMPUS AND THE RESCUE MISSION'S NEW HOME.

ADDITIONALLY, OUR FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM HAS RESULTED IN 99 NEW SMALL BUSINESS PROJECTS AND LED TO FIVE-MILLION DOLLARS IN PRIVATE INVESTMENT ALONG OUR URBAN CORRIDORS.

FURTHERMORE, WE NOW HAVE NEW PARTNERSHIPS, LED BY OUR OFFICE OF HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES, WITH VINCENT VILLAGE, BOTTLE WORKS LOFTS, POSTERITY SCHOLAR HOUSE, AND THE JOHNNIE MAE FARM WHICH ARE BRINGING STABILITY AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SOME OF THE MOST VULNERABLE IN OUR COMMUNITY.

AND, THIS FALL, FORT WAYNE WILL BE FRONT AND CENTER AS WE WELCOME GUESTS FROM OHIO, ILLINOIS, KENTUCKY, AND TENNESSEE FOR THE REGIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK CONFERENCE.

THIS WILL BE OUR CHANCE TO SHOW OFF WHAT WE'RE DOING TO MAKE LIVING, WORKING, AND PLAYING IN FORT WAYNE THE ENVY OF THE MIDWEST.

YOU KNOW, IN FORT WAYNE WE'RE NOT ONLY THINKING BIG, BUT WE'RE OPEN TO NEW IDEAS AS WELL.

THAT'S WHY I'M PROUD FORT WAYNE HAS MADE A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO THE ARTS.

AN APPRECIATION OF THE ARTS CERTAINLY MAKES US A MORE ATTRACTIVE CITY.

FROM THE PUBLIC ART COMMISSION TO THE NEW ARTS CAMPUS, WE'RE NOW RECOGNIZED THROUGHOUT INDIANA AS A LEADER IN VALUING AND CELEBRATING THE ARTS.

I CAN'T THINK OF TWO PEOPLE WHO'VE DONE MORE TO BRING ARTS TO THE FOREFRONT OF OUR COMMUNITY THAN SUSAN MENDENHALL AND DAN ROSS OF ARTS UNITED.

DAN AND SUSAN, WILL BOTH OF YOU PLEASE STAND. LET'S GIVE THEM A ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

SUSAN, DAN, AND HUNDREDS OF OTHER BOARD MEMBERS, STAFF, AND VOLUNTEERS ARE DRIVING OUR CREATIVE COMMUNITY.

I'M ALSO GRATEFUL THAT FORT WAYNE IS A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE CITY.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA WILL HOST THE 2019 INTERNATIONAL BLIND SPORTS FEDERATION QUALIFYING COMPETITION.

AND, IT WILL BE RIGHT HERE IN FORT WAYNE THIS SUMMER.

THE HIGHLIGHTED SPORTS WILL CONSIST OF GOALBALL AND JUDO.

NEARLY 500 ATHLETES FROM 40 COUNTRIES ARE SCHEDULED TO TAKE PART IN THESE UNIQUE PARALYMPIC COMPETITIONS.

THE TOP PERFORMERS WILL QUALIFY FOR THE 2020 PARALYMPIC GAMES IN TOKYO.

BEING THE FIRST U-S CITY TO HOST SUCH AN IMPORTANT EVENT IS A TESTAMENT TO THE GREAT WORK TAKING PLACE EACH DAY AT TURNSTONE.

TURNSTONE C-E-O MIKE MUSHETT, TURNSTONE BOARD CHAIR TOM TRENT, ATHLETES LISA CZECHOWSKI AND CODY CARMICLE, AND COACHES JAKE CZECHOWSKI AND MATT BOYLE ARE WITH US TODAY.

PLEASE STAND SO WE CAN ACKNOWLEDGE THIS TREMENDOUS ACCOMPLISHMENT.

WE'RE A CITY THAT'S BECOMING STRONGER AND READY TO TACKLE AND EMBRACE WHATEVER LIES AHEAD OF US.

TO THE MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL, I WISH YOU THE VERY BEST IN 2019.

OPEN COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE WILL BE IMPORTANT AS WE MOVE FORWARD THIS YEAR.

BY WORKING IN A COLLABORATIVE MANNER, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR OUR CITY.

OUR RESIDENTS, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND BUSINESSES DESERVE THE VERY BEST.

I CAN SAY WITH BOLDNESS THAT FORT WAYNE IS BETTER TODAY THAN IT WAS YESTERDAY, AND WE'LL BE EVEN BETTER TOMORROW.

INDEED, THE STATE OF OUR CITY IS STRONG.

BUT, WE MUST BE WILLING TO STRIVE FOR GREATNESS.

OUR FUTURE CAN AND HAS TO BE NOW.

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

THANK YOU.