

MAYOR TOM HENRY'S 2021 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

TO THE RESIDENTS OF FORT WAYNE, GOOD AFTERNOON.

AS I STAND HERE TODAY, OUR LIVES ARE MUCH DIFFERENT THAN THEY WERE JUST A YEAR AGO.

I'M USED TO SEEING A PACKED ROOM HERE AT THE GRAND WAYNE CENTER.

AND, I ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD TO BEING WITH A DIVERSE GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS COMMITTED TO FORT WAYNE'S SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING.

HOWEVER, FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY, WE DECIDED TO NOT HAVE GUESTS WITH US TODAY.

I DO THOUGH HAVE MEDIA AND ESSENTIAL CITY OF FORT WAYNE STAFF MEMBERS WITH ME TO HELP BRING THIS ADDRESS TO YOU VIA TELEVISION, RADIO, NEWSPAPER, AND SOCIAL MEDIA.

I DON'T THINK ANYONE COULD HAVE IMAGINED THE IMPACT THAT COVID-19 WOULD HAVE ON FORT WAYNE AND EVERY COMMUNITY ACROSS OUR COUNTRY.

TO THOSE WHO HAVE LOST LOVED ONES OR ARE EXPERIENCING THE VIRUS NOW, MY THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS GO OUT TO YOU.

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER, AND I GRIEVE WITH YOU AS WE WORK EACH DAY TO MAKE FORT WAYNE HEALTHIER AND SAFER.

I ALSO KNOW THAT INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES HAVE BEEN HURT BY THE LOSS OF A JOB, NOT KNOWING WHERE THE MONEY WILL COME FROM FOR FOOD, AND HOW TO MAKE THAT MORTGAGE OR APARTMENT PAYMENT.

A NUMBER OF LOCAL BUSINESSES, LARGE AND SMALL, ARE SUFFERING AND SOME HAVE HAD TO CLOSE.

PLEASE KNOW WE RECOGNIZE THESE HARDSHIPS AND WE CARE.

MY TOP PRIORITY IS TO ENSURE THAT THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE OF FORT WAYNE ARE BEING MET.

THROUGH HIGH-TRUST PARTNERSHIPS WITH MANY ORGANIZATIONS, WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS OWNERS.

WITH FEDERAL FUNDING, WE'VE SHELTERED THE HOMELESS, IMPLEMENTED

BUSINESS RELIEF PROGRAMS, SUPPORTED LOCAL RESTAURANT INITIATIVES, AND PROVIDED GRANTS TO SMALL BUSINESSES TO ASSIST WITH COVID-RELATED NEEDS.

AND NOW, WE'RE WORKING TO GET MORE FUNDS OUT TO FAMILIES WHO HAVE FALLEN BEHIND ON THEIR RENT AND UTILITY BILLS TO HELP ENSURE HOUSING STABILITY AND PREVENT HOMELESSNESS.

IN SO MANY WAYS, WE'RE SHOWING THAT WE'RE A COMMUNITY THAT IS CARING AND GIVING AND WILL BE THERE TO BRING ENCOURAGEMENT TO OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS.

I WANT TO THANK BRIGHTPOINT, JUST NEIGHBORS INTERFAITH HOMELESS NETWORK, ST. JOSEPH MISSIONS, THE LUTHERAN FOUNDATION, BLUE JACKET, UNITED WAY OF ALLEN COUNTY, THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT, ALLEN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, CITY COUNCIL, AND GREATER FORT WAYNE, INC.

THOSE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE AGENCIES AND ELECTED BODIES THAT HAVE COME TOGETHER TO SAY IT'S OUR TIME TO MAKE AN IMPACT AND HELP NAVIGATE OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH COVID-19.

THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT WE COULDN'T FIGHT THIS PANDEMIC WITHOUT THE TRUE HEROES IN THIS BATTLE – THE HOSPITALS, DOCTORS, NURSES, HEALTHCARE SUPPORT STAFF, AND EMERGENCY PERSONNEL.

THEY'VE BEEN ON THE FRONT LINES SINCE MARCH WORKING TIRELESSLY TO SERVE AND PROTECT.

WE'RE SO GRATEFUL FOR THEIR DEDICATION AND HOW THEY PUT OTHERS FIRST.

I'D BE REMISS IF I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE AND THANK ALLEN COUNTY HEALTH COMMISSIONER DOCTOR MATTHEW SUTTER AND HIS PREDECESSOR DOCTOR DEBORAH MCMAHAN.

DIFFICULT TIMES REQUIRE LEADERSHIP, AND WE'RE GETTING OUTSTANDING DIRECTION FROM THE ALLEN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

DOCTOR SUTTER, HEALTH DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATOR MINDY WALDRON, AND THEIR EMPLOYEES CARE DEEPLY ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY.

THEIR COLLECTIVE, PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO THIS ONCE IN A GENERATION HEALTH CRISIS HAS BEEN SUPERB.

AND, WITH VACCINATIONS UNDERWAY, THERE IS HOPE AND OPTIMISM FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW.

I KNOW THAT WE'RE ALL FATIGUED, BUT WE CAN'T LET OUR GUARD DOWN.

WE MUST CONTINUE TO MASK UP, PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING, WASH HANDS OFTEN, AND LIMIT LARGE GATHERINGS.

LET'S DEFEND THE FORT, TOGETHER.

FORT WAYNE, IT'S OUR TIME.

THROUGH CHALLENGES HAVE COME OPPORTUNITIES.

FOR EXAMPLE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GREATER FORT WAYNE, INC., THERE WERE 760 NEW JOBS CREATED, 832 JOBS RETAINED, AND 105-MILLION DOLLARS IN PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN THE CITY OF FORT WAYNE IN 2020.

COMPANIES LIKE UTEC, DREYER'S, APTERA, SORTERA ALLOYS, AND AMAZON'S DELIVERY STATION NEAR THE AIRPORT MADE SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS LAST YEAR.

THERE WILL BE EVEN MORE INVESTMENTS IN FORT WAYNE IN 2021.

PROJECT GATEWAY AT FORT WAYNE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IS A SIGN OF CONTINUED PROGRESS AND MOMENTUM IN FORT WAYNE.

THE 51-MILLION DOLLAR TERMINAL EXPANSION WILL BETTER SERVE ITS GUESTS AND SUPPORT OUR REGION'S GROWTH WITH A BEST-IN-CLASS TERMINAL.

THE FORT WAYNE REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OWNS PROPERTY ALONG U-S 30 AND IS CLOSE TO ENTERING INTO A DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT FOR A SUBSTANTIAL PROJECT AT THAT SITE.

THIS WILL BE AN IMPORTANT MOMENT FOR OUR COMMUNITY.

YOU'LL BE LEARNING MORE IN THE WEEKS AHEAD.

INCIDENTALLY, IT CONTINUES TO BE OUR TIME IN DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE AS WELL.

REVITALIZATION EFFORTS HAVE RESULTED IN NEARLY ONE-BILLION DOLLARS OF INVESTMENT IN THE HEART OF OUR CITY OVER THE LAST DECADE.

THAT'S SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF BECAUSE WE ALL KNOW A VIBRANT

DOWNTOWN DRIVES THE OVERALL HEALTH OF THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED, THOUGH.

LET ME BE THE FIRST TO TELL YOU THAT A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING IS NOW IN PLACE FOR A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT ON THE NORTH RIVER SITE.

IT'S A PROPOSED PROJECT EXCEEDING 150-MILLION DOLLARS.

THE PLAN CALLS FOR A PROFESSIONAL SOCCER STADIUM, FIELDHOUSE, EVENT CENTER, AND HOTEL.

IN ADDITION, THERE WILL BE RESTAURANTS, RESIDENTIAL, RETAIL, OFFICE, AND PUBLIC SPACES, AS WELL AS PARKING.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HAVING MORE DETAILS AVAILABLE SOON.

TRULY, IT'S NOW OUR TIME NORTH OF THE RIVER.

THE RIVERFRONT AT PROMENADE PARK LED BY BARRETT AND STOKELY WILL BREAK GROUND NEXT WEEK.

THE 88-MILLION DOLLAR DEVELOPMENT AND FIRST PRIVATE INVESTMENT ALONG OUR RIVERFRONT WILL INCLUDE HOUSING, A PARKING GARAGE, AND OFFICE AND RETAIL SPACE.

THERE WILL BE ADDITIONAL RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT AS WELL.

DESIGN DETAILS, CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS, AND BIDDING FOR PHASE 2 WILL BE COMPLETED THIS YEAR WITH CONSTRUCTION SLATED FOR 2022.

WE'LL ALSO SEE MORE PUBLIC SPACES TO COMPLEMENT PROMENADE PARK.

THIS EFFORT WILL CONTINUE TO SET THE TABLE FOR EVEN MORE PRIVATE INVESTMENT.

IN ADDITION, WORK WILL BEGIN LATER THIS YEAR ON THE LOFTS AT HEADWATERS PARK.

ALSO LED BY BARRETT AND STOKELY, THE 67-MILLION DOLLAR PROJECT WILL FEATURE APARTMENTS, A PARKING GARAGE, AND OFFICE AND RETAIL SPACE NEXT TO CLUB SODA.

GROUND HAS BEEN BROKEN TOO ON THE ASHBERRY PROJECT.

IT'S A SEVEN-STORY MIXED-USE BUILDING AT MAIN STREET AND MAIDEN LANE.

IT WILL BE HOME TO THE CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS FOR STAR FINANCIAL BANK.

AND, THE 43-MILLION DOLLAR DEVELOPMENT WILL PROVIDE COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL SPACE, AS WELL AS MUCH-NEEDED PUBLIC PARKING.

THERE'S EVEN MORE AS THE BRADLEY HOTEL WILL OPEN IN APRIL.

THE 124-ROOM BOUTIQUE-STYLE HOTEL AT THE CORNER OF MAIN AND HARRISON STREETS WILL OFFER UNIQUE ACCOMMODATIONS THAT ARE ALL ABOUT FORT WAYNE AND WILL BE A FIRST FOR OUR GROWING COMMUNITY.

THE LANDING IS ALSO NOW OPEN AND THRIVING.

THE 35-MILLION DOLLAR REDEVELOPMENT EFFORT HAS HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL SPACES, ALL OF WHICH ARE DOING WELL.

THE LANDING HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR SPOTS IN TOWN, AND I KNEW IT WOULD BE.

TREMENDOUS PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE ON THE ELECTRIC WORKS PROJECT.

CLOSING HAS OCCURRED AND CONSTRUCTION IS UNDERWAY.

CONGRATULATIONS TO RTM VENTURES, THE MODEL GROUP, AND TIM ASH.

THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDING COMMITMENTS HAVE BEEN MET, AND DO IT BEST IS IN THE PROCESS OF MOVING THEIR INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS TO THE ELECTRIC WORKS CAMPUS.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO FUTURE SUCCESSES AT THE SITE.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC DRIVER AND WILL HELP PROVIDE STABILITY WITH LOCAL CONSTRUCTION JOBS AND GROW ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER SECTORS AS WELL.

AS OUR DOWNTOWN CONTINUES TO BE REVITALIZED, WE'RE ALSO MAKING AND SEEING INVESTMENTS IN SOUTHEAST FORT WAYNE.

THROUGH THE SOUTHEAST STRATEGY, WE HAVE AN UPDATED ROADMAP FOR EXCITING POSSIBILITIES.

WE WILL ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE AMENITIES, INCREASE BUSINESS

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES, BRING MORE RETAIL TO THE AREA, MARKET RATE HOUSING, AND ESTABLISH UNIQUE PLACEMAKING SETTINGS FOR THE PUBLIC TO ENJOY.

THANK YOU TO SIXTH DISTRICT CITY COUNCILWOMAN SHARON TUCKER, THE CITY'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION, THE SOUTHEAST AREA PARTNERSHIP, AND OUR SOUTHEAST AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP.

WITH ALL OF OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, IT'S NO WONDER THAT FORT WAYNE IS BEING RECOGNIZED ON A NATIONAL AND STATEWIDE LEVEL.

WE'RE THE 5TH LOWEST COST OF LIVING CITY, THE 8TH BEST RUN CITY, AND THE 11TH MOST LIVABLE CITY.

ADDITIONALLY, WE'RE A TOP 50 CITY FOR COMBINED JOB OPPORTUNITIES, COST OF LIVING, AND INCOME POTENTIAL FOR RECENT COLLEGE GRADUATES.

JUST LAST MONTH, WE WERE NAMED A TOP 10 CITY WHERE YOUNG RESIDENTS ARE BUYING HOMES.

WE'RE ALSO A TOP 10 MOST AFFORDABLE CITY FOR EARLY RETIREMENT.

THROUGH THE PANDEMIC, TWO NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS NAMED FORT WAYNE ONE OF THE BEST CITIES IN THE COUNTRY TO WORK FROM HOME.

AND, INDIANA'S CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NAMED FORT WAYNE AS THE COMMUNITY OF THE YEAR FOR 2020.

UNDOUBTEDLY, OUR COMMITMENT TO BEING A HIGH-PERFORMING CITY HAS BEEN UNWAVERING DURING COVID-19.

THROUGH TEAMWORK AND PERSEVERANCE, WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.

IT HASN'T BEEN EASY, BUT IT'S A TESTAMENT TO THE NEARLY 2,000 CITY EMPLOYEES WHO CARE ABOUT ALL OF YOU.

IT STARTS THOUGH WITH FISCAL DISCIPLINE AT THE FOREFRONT.

OUR BALANCED BUDGET FOR THIS YEAR IS DESIGNED TO CONTINUE NEEDED SERVICES WHILE ALSO SETTING ASIDE FUNDS TO BE ABLE TO ADDRESS FUTURE UNCERTAINTIES.

I CAN'T SAY ENOUGH ABOUT THE WORK OF OUR CITY CONTROLLER AND HIS

TEAM AND CITY COUNCIL AS OUR BUDGETARY PARTNERS TO HELP ENSURE TAXPAYERS ARE SERVED AND PROTECTED.

NEVER BEFORE HAVE WE HAD SUCH A COMPLEX SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES IMPACT OUR FINANCIAL PICTURE, BUT WE RESPONDED AND HAVE SUCCEEDED.

IN FACT, IT'S TRULY REMARKABLE THAT WE WERE ABLE TO COMPLETE MORE THAN 28-MILLION DOLLARS OF NEIGHBORHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS DURING A PANDEMIC.

THIS DIDN'T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT.

THOUGHTFUL AND SOUND PLANNING BY THE PUBLIC WORKS DIVISION HELPED ADVANCE OUR EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE OUR INFRASTRUCTURE.

THERE WAS WORK IN EVERY AREA OF THE CITY, AND WE'RE PLANNING FOR ANOTHER NEARLY 28-MILLION DOLLARS OF UPGRADES IN 2021.

FROM MAJOR CORRIDOR WORK TO NEW SIDEWALKS, CURBS, ALLEYS, AND BRIDGE MAINTENANCE, WE'LL BE MAKING SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS THROUGHOUT FORT WAYNE.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE MAPLECREST ROAD, LUDWIG ROAD, THE PETTIT-RUDISILL NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE GREATER MCMILLEN PARK NEIGHBORHOOD.

AND, PROVIDING BASIC SERVICES SUCH AS LEAF COLLECTION CONTINUES TO SET US APART AS A TOP-PERFORMING CITY.

MORE THAN 18-THOUSAND TONS OF LEAVES WERE COLLECTED BY OUR STREET DEPARTMENT.

CITY EMPLOYEES ARE GETTING THE JOB DONE FOR RESIDENTS AND NEIGHBORHOODS.

EVEN OUR FLEET DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO SET THE PACE WITH STATEWIDE AND NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR PROACTIVE EFFORTS, INCLUDING THE USE OF BIODIESEL FUEL.

WE'RE ALSO LEADING THE WAY IN PROVIDING TOP QUALITY OF PLACE AMENITIES AS WE INVEST IN OUR TRAILS.

IN FACT, 2020 WAS A RECORD YEAR FOR TRAIL USAGE WITH MORE THAN 600-HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE BEING COUNTED.

THAT'S A 45-PERCENT PERCENT JUMP FROM 2019.

MORE AND MORE RESIDENTS FOUND OUR OVER 100 MILES OF TRAILS AS A SAFE AND CONVENIENT RESOURCE DURING THE PANDEMIC.

TRAIL EXPANSION WILL OCCUR THIS YEAR WITH THE FISHING LINE TRAIL IN NORTHWEST FORT WAYNE, THE DUPONT ROAD TRAIL, THE HANNA STREET TRAIL, AND THE NEXT PHASES OF THE LAKE AVENUE TRAIL AND MAPLECREST ROAD TRAIL.

CERTAINLY, WE CAN'T BE A THRIVING CITY WITHOUT EXCELLENT SERVICES FROM CITY UTILITIES.

MORE THAN 100-MILLION DOLLARS IN NEIGHBORHOOD WATER, SEWER, AND STORMWATER IMPROVEMENTS OCCURRED IN 2020, AND SIMILAR INVESTMENTS WILL CONTINUE IN 2021.

REPLACING AGING WATER MAINS, ADDRESSING DRAINAGE ISSUES, AND ADVANCING THE DEEP ROCK TUNNEL PROJECT ARE MAJOR PRIORITIES FOR THIS YEAR.

AND, THE HESSEN CASSEL, BLACKHAWK, AND FAIRMONT NEIGHBORHOODS ARE ADDITIONAL AREAS WHERE CITY UTILITIES WILL BE MAKING IMPROVEMENTS.

CITY UTILITIES IS ALSO THE RECIPIENT OF TWO NATIONAL AWARDS FOR WATER QUALITY AND A STATE AWARD FOR FIRE HYDRANT EFFICIENCY.

AND, THEY'RE A RECOGNIZED LEADER IN EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH FORT WAYNE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.

IT'S ENCOURAGING TO HAVE SO MANY CITY DIVISIONS AND DEPARTMENTS PERFORMING AT A HIGH LEVEL.

IT'S EVIDENT AT OUR AWARD-WINNING PARKS, ALL 87 OF THEM.

THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT WAS AN UNSUNG HERO IN 2020 AS THEY STEPPED UP AND PROVIDED THE PUBLIC WITH SAFE PROGRAMMING AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

FROM VIRTUAL PROGRAMS TO YOUTH CENTER MEAL SERVICE TO THE POPULARITY OF OUR GOLF COURSES, WE SAW INCREASED PARK USAGE, ALONG WITH THREE-MILLION DOLLARS IN CAPITAL INVESTMENTS AND OVER 55 IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.

THIS YEAR, WE'RE GOING TO INVEST ANOTHER THREE-MILLION DOLLARS WITH

VARIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS AND CONSTRUCTION WORK AT FRANKE, FOSTER, KREAGER, LAFAYETTE, LAKESIDE, NORTHSIDE, WEISSER, AND SHOAFF PARKS JUST TO NAME A FEW.

WE ALSO KNOW THAT WE CAN'T SUCCEED AS A CITY UNLESS WE PROVIDE RESIDENTS, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND BUSINESSES WITH THE BEST PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES POSSIBLE.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS WE CAN DO FOR YOU IS TO PROVIDE YOU WITH THE COMFORT OF KNOWING YOU LIVE A SAFE CITY.

IN PUBLIC SAFETY, OPEN COMMUNICATION, ACCESSIBILITY, COMMUNITY RELATIONS, AND TRUST ARE CRUCIAL.

OVERALL CRIME IN FORT WAYNE WAS DOWN 13 PERCENT IN 2020.

NOW, VIOLENT CRIME ITSELF WAS UP, BUT WE DID HAVE A HOMICIDE CLEARANCE RATE OF 81 PERCENT AND NOW HAVE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR OUR HOMICIDE UNIT.

AND, OUR GANG AND VIOLENT CRIMES UNIT SEIZED 146 ILLEGAL FIREARMS AND PERFORMED 22 SEARCH WARRANTS.

THE VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WAS ONE OF JUST 13 ENTITIES IN THE COUNTRY TO BE RECOGNIZED WITH A CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS AWARD FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.

AND THIS YEAR, WE'RE INCLUDING TWO SOCIAL WORKERS TO ASSIST THE DEPARTMENT, AND ADDING AT LEAST 100 BODY CAMERAS FOR OUR OFFICERS.

WE ALSO NOW HAVE 17 NEW OFFICERS ON THE STREET THROUGH THE GRADUATION OF OUR 65TH RECRUIT CLASS.

AND, ANOTHER LATERAL CLASS FOR 2021 WILL ASSIST US IN OUR EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN OFFICER LEVELS AT 480.

WE'RE FORTUNATE THAT OUR POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS WORK SO WELL TOGETHER AND HAVE FORGED STRONG PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND OUR CITIZENS.

DURING COVID-19, OUR WOMEN AND MEN IN PUBLIC SAFETY HAVE BATTLED THROUGH A LOT AND HAVE BEEN A STEADY AND VISIBLE PRESENCE IN ALL QUADRANTS OF OUR CITY.

FOR EXAMPLE, OUR FORT WAYNE FIRE DEPARTMENT SPENT 2020 MANAGING

THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 TO MEET THE EMERGENCY NEEDS OF THE PUBLIC WHILE RESPONDING TO OVER 23-THOUSAND CALLS FOR SERVICE.

THIS YEAR, I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE DEPARTMENT ADDING TWO NEW ENGINES.

AND, THE 93RD RECRUIT CLASS WILL BEGIN.

THERE WILL ALSO BE AN EXPANSION TO THE LIVE BURN TRAINING CENTER WHICH WILL ALLOW THE DEPARTMENT TO ADD A THREE-STORY SIMULATOR, INCREASING OUR CAPABILITY TO TRAIN OUR FIREFIGHTERS FOR EVERY EMERGENCY.

ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL IS PART OF OUR PUBLIC SAFETY EFFORTS, TOO.

LAST YEAR SAW SUCCESSFUL FOSTERING AND ADOPTION EFFORTS, AS WELL AS A PROACTIVE PET RETENTION PROGRAM.

IN ADDITION, LIFE-SAVING CARE AT THE SHELTER WAS BOLSTERED BY A 50-THOUSAND DOLLAR GRANT TO PURCHASE AN X-RAY MACHINE TO QUICKLY ASSESS AND TREAT INJURED ANIMALS ON-SITE.

IT'S NO SECRET THAT 2020 PRESENTED US WITH OUR SHARE OF NEW CHALLENGES.

AS A COMMUNITY, WE EXPERIENCED DEMONSTRATIONS, PROTESTS, AND SOCIAL UNREST FOLLOWING THE TRAGIC DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD.

WE HAD SOME UNEASY AND UNCOMFORTABLE MOMENTS.

AS A RESULT, THE COMMISSION ON POLICE REFORM AND RACIAL JUSTICE WAS CREATED.

THEY'VE BEEN MEETING SINCE LAST SUMMER.

LATER THIS MONTH, THE COMMISSION WILL PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ME ON WAYS FOR OUR COMMUNITY TO MOVE FORWARD WITH POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO CHALLENGES.

I WANT TO THANK CITY COUNCILWOMAN MICHELLE CHAMBERS AND BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS C-E-O JOE JORDAN FOR LEADING THE COMMISSION.

THEIR LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT TO THE PROCESS WAS INVALUABLE.

WE ALSO HAD MORE THAN A DOZEN COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS STEP UP TO

SERVE ON THE COMMISSION.

THROUGH LISTENING AND LEARNING, WE CAN HEAL AND BE MORE APPRECIATIVE OF ONE ANOTHER AND BE A STRONGER AND MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY.

EVERY RESIDENT WHO CALLS FORT WAYNE HOME SHOULD BE RESPECTED, APPRECIATED, AND VALUED.

IT'S OUR TIME TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH TRAINING, RACIAL HEALING, AND UNITY.

THAT'S NOW HAPPENING IN OUR CITY THROUGH THE UNITED FRONT INITIATIVE.

MORE THAN 150 COMPANIES AND THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUALS IN FORT WAYNE ARE PARTICIPATING IN THIS EFFORT THAT'S LED BY FORT WAYNE UNITED.

WE'RE LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER ON THE TOPICS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION.

THE TEN POINT COALITION, ANOTHER PROGRAM CREATED BY FORT WAYNE UNITED, WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN GETTING FOOD TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN NEED DURING THE PANDEMIC.

MORE THAN 40,000 PEOPLE WERE SERVED THROUGH THIS EFFORT.

AND, THAT'S IN ADDITION TO THEIR WORK IN THE OXFORD NEIGHBORHOOD BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER WITH ENCOURAGEMENT INSTEAD OF TEARING DOWN WITH VIOLENCE.

THESE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE EXAMPLES OF THE TREMENDOUS IMPACT FORT WAYNE UNITED IS HAVING IN OUR COMMUNITY.

KINDNESS MATTERS.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IS CRITICAL.

MOVING FORWARD, WE MUST ALSO ADDRESS THE PHYSICAL HEALTH OF RESIDENTS IN FORT WAYNE.

PRIOR TO COVID-19, WE WERE GETTING READY TO LAUNCH A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM TO HELP MAKE OUR CITY HEALTHIER.

INFANT MORTALITY, TOBACCO USE, TYPE 2 DIABETES, AND OBESITY ARE AREAS

OF CONCERN THAT I WANT TO TACKLE IN 2021.

TOGETHER WITH OUR HEALTHCARE PARTNERS, WE CAN AND WE WILL FIND WAYS TO IMPROVE THE DAILY LIVES OF OUR RESIDENTS.

SPEAKING OF HEALTH, I'M ENCOURAGED THAT FORT WAYNE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH, THE OXFORD NEIGHBORHOOD, AND OTHER GROUPS HAVE PARTNERED TO REPURPOSE THE FORMER WARD EDUCATION CENTER ON WARSAW STREET.

NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH WILL UTILIZE THE BUILDING FOR HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS.

IT'S ALL PART OF AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE THROUGH HEALTHY LIVING OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

OUR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING ARE ALSO AFFECTED BY HOW WE TREAT OUR ENVIRONMENT.

THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIANA UNIVERSITY'S ENVIRONMENTAL INSTITUTE, WE'RE LOOKING TO IMPLEMENT A CLIMATE ACTION PLAN LATER THIS YEAR.

TO CONTINUE TO BE A CITY KNOWN FOR EXCELLENT AND UNIQUE QUALITY OF LIFE AMENITIES, WE MUST BE AWARE OF HOW OUR ACTIONS IMPACT THE ENVIRONMENT.

FORT WAYNE IS LEADING THE WAY IN THE CLIMATE ARENA, AS A TWO-TIME WINNER OF THE UTILITY OF THE FUTURE AWARD FOR ENERGY CONSERVATION AND USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES, BUT THERE'S MORE TO BE DONE.

USING ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES, REDUCING DEPENDENCY ON FOSSIL FUELS, UTILIZING SOLAR ENERGY OPTIONS, AND CONVERTING ORGANIC WASTE TO METHANE AT OUR WATER POLLUTION CONTROL PLANT, WE CAN TRULY MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE.

PUBLIC ART IS ALSO A STRENGTH IN OUR COMMUNITY THAT CONTINUES TO EXPAND.

IT'S IMPERATIVE THAT ARTS AND CULTURE BE PRIORITIZED.

FOR EXAMPLE, OUR LATEST ADDITION TO THE PUBLIC ART SCENE IS 77 STEPS.

IT'S IN THE ALLEY BETWEEN 113 AND 127 WEST BERRY STREET.

BE SURE TO CHECK IT OUT.

THE “ALL IN ALLEN” COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING EFFORT IS HELPING US PREPARE FOR WHAT DEVELOPMENT WILL LOOK LIKE OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS.

NEIGHBORHOODS ARE INVESTING IN THEMSELVES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH OUR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION.

PEOPLE MATTER, AND OUR OFFICE OF HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES WORKS EVERY DAY TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF OUR MOST VULNERABLE ADULTS, FAMILIES, AND CHILDREN.

AS WE REFLECT BACK ON WHAT WE’VE BEEN THROUGH AND LOOK FORWARD, TAKE SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT ALL THE THINGS WE CAN BE THANKFUL FOR.

I’M HOPEFUL THAT YOU’RE AS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE AS I AM. FRIENDS, FORT WAYNE IS POSITIONED FOR CONTINUED GROWTH AND SUCCESS.

WITH ALL OF THE ANGST AND UNCERTAINTY THAT 2020 BROUGHT US, THE STATE OF OUR CITY REMAINS STRONG.

TOGETHER, WE’VE PROVEN OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT WE’RE RESILIENT, CARING, AND BOLD.

WE CAN AND WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO BUILD OTHERS UP.

WE ARE FORT WAYNE, A CITY LIKE NO OTHER.

OUR FUTURE IS NOW.

FORT WAYNE, IT’S OUR TIME.

LET’S GET TO WORK.

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

THANK YOU.