



**MARK W. MYERS**

**Mayor**

## **2016 - State of the City Address**

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Welcome. Your participation here today sends a very positive message across central Indiana that Greenwood is a city on the move. Citizens are engaged. Organizations are engaged. Our business community is engaged. Together, Greenwood is a city of pride and progress. This is the fifth time I've had the opportunity to come before you to present the State of the City Address.

Thank you Christian Maslowski, Mike Combs and the entire Greater Greenwood Chamber of Commerce staff and board for hosting this event. The Chamber's popularity is a testament to the engagement of our local business community. No City prospers without the support of an active and committed business community. We take pride in the City's partnership with the Chamber and appreciate the encouragement and support we continue to receive for our economic initiatives.

And thank you to all of you as well. It has been a pleasure and an honor to serve the citizens of Greenwood for the last four years. I've learned a great deal, and even though Greenwood has been home for most of my life, hardly a day passes without learning more about our amazing City, its wonderful history and the extraordinary people who make Greenwood such a special place.

During the past four years, we have built a solid foundation for success and future growth:

- Our budgets are both transparent and balanced.
- When I was first elected more than 4 years ago, Greenwood was burning through its cash reserve. It has taken time and careful planning, but I can now report that every City account is close to or above a 50% reserve.

- In 2016, we rolled out our first-ever Citizen's budget, condensing volumes of financial information into an easily digestible, four-page document accessible by anyone at any time. Citizens are already reviewing the budget and providing valuable feedback. I encourage everyone to visit the City's website and take a look for yourself.
- Our budgeting process and financial disclosures are state-of-the-art. I'm proud to announce that for the second year in a row, our Finance Department is being honored with a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association.
- The City has an excellent credit rating and is able to borrow money and refinance existing debt at the lowest rates. The banks who buy our bonds have high confidence in our fiscal health and trust in our accounting. In fact, within the last year Standard & Poor's Rating Services increased Greenwood's credit rating two notches to A+.
- We've taken steps to become more transparent in other areas as well.
- Greenwood is the first city in Indiana to use OpenGov, a software platform that is transforming how governments analyze, share and compare financial data. It's a remarkable tool, and I urge all citizens to visit the City's website and take a look.
- Our City was the third in the nation to begin using Common Point 360, a dynamic new platform designed to provide real-time access and information pertaining to Greenwood's business attraction and growth efforts.
- We are replacing and improving infrastructure at a pace never before seen in Greenwood. We're improving our stormwater system, bettering roadways, upgrading our sanitary sewer infrastructure, increasing access points to major highways, and revitalizing buildings on Main Street with more than \$1.2 million to create a more modern and unified public-facing façade.

- Pundits, news sources and businesses are taking notice. They recognize our stability and our commitment to both growth and improvement. In just the last month alone, we've read how Greenwood will "snag the spotlight," how "a new era is underway," and how our City "continues to attract major retailers and new developments." And my favorite, "a renaissance Mayor!"
- The seeds we've planted are now producing fruit, and I continue to see an increase in new business opportunities crossing my desk every day.

In leading this great City, I wake up every day focused on four key areas: Public Safety, Infrastructure, Quality of Life and Economic Development. These are the four pillars for making and keeping Greenwood the best it can be. We can all take pride in the substantial progress made in these four areas.

Continued progress in these four areas is important to me, important to you and important to our children and future generations. What we do today in these four areas determines whether this city will continue to move forward or fall behind.

What we do in these four areas determines whether we can build a strong identity and a strong sense of community or lose out to other cities pursuing the same goals.

Greenwood can compete. Greenwood must compete. Our focus on these four areas gives us a competitive advantage. It's an advantage that each of us wants. It's an advantage that honors our past and assures a better future – a brighter, safer and more prosperous future for every citizen.

Let's look at each of these four pillars.

## **First, there is Public Safety.**

When I first decided to run for Mayor, it was clear public safety would be my top priority. More than four years later, this remains at the top of my list. Using considerable resources, we have been able to make significant improvements to the City's public safety equipment.

- We've upgraded over half of the patrol units in the Police Department.
- We purchased three new Fire Engines and a new fire rescue vehicle.
- And we've had tremendous help in this area as well. Firefighters and Police Officers have written successful grant proposals bring in more than \$850,000. These grants have allowed the City to purchase everything from new air packs to new bullet proof vests.

One investment I am particularly excited for is the signal preemption project that the City has received grant money to help fund. Once completed, all traffic signals in Greenwood will be equipped with technology that allows firefighters and police officers to preemptively activate traffic lights as they travel to an emergency situation. This allows public safety officers to arrive to a scene much quicker and will also safeguard both officers and civilians at intersections throughout the City.

We are blessed to have men and women in both our police and fire departments that are willing every day to put their lives on the line. Who serve and protect and do so with professionalism, skill, character and honor. These men and women deserve our support and appreciation.

Last year, I directed my staff to create a balanced budget that would add new full-time Police and Firefighters to the City Payroll. After a lot of number crunching, some long afternoons for Adam, and some very difficult tradeoffs, we were able to add three full-time police officers and three full-time firefighters in 2016.

However, the City is still significantly below the national averages for the recommended ratios of police and firefighters for our population.

I promise to you that the City will pursue every reasonable avenue to secure funding sources for new public safety staff during my second term. We will keep pushing for the ability to determine our own fate on food and beverage taxes. We will research and apply for grants to help offset our budgets. And we will continue to constantly make our operations more efficient through training, investments and partnerships.

**The second area I want to discuss is Infrastructure.**

Reliable utilities. Safe roads. Safe places to walk, ride your bike or push a stroller.

In order for our residents and visitors to enjoy the all of public and private amenities the City has to offer, we have to make sure that safe access is provided for all means of transportation. We now realize that for a modern City to thrive, connectivity and safe routes must be created. We have already made some improvements to meet this goal.

- New trails have been created at Freedom Park, Worthsville Road, and Fry Road.
- Over the next four years, the City will complete the Play Pocket Trail in Craig Park creating a Green Route from the Smith Valley pedestrian bridge to Fire Station 91 at Main Street.
- I have also charged my staff to make the plans and investments necessary to connect the City's network of Parks in Old Town Greenwood.
- By the end of my second term, I believe that families will be able to safely walk and bike between the Splash Pad at City Center Park and the Gazebo at Children's Garden Park.

While pedestrian and bicycle traffic is certainly important, the City's central transportation asset is its network of roads. The City currently maintains 210 miles of roadway. To put that number in perspective, it is only 190 miles from Greenwood to Chicago. We have aggressively maintained and upgraded our roads over the last four years, and I plan to continue this pace going forward.

And unlike last year, we will not be closing all of our roads at once...

The City is currently planning several road infrastructure projects to help ease traffic and expand the road network:

- The Redevelopment Commission has recently committed funds to help construct and design the next phases of Worthsville Road. We are currently designing improvements to the corridor that will expand the four-lane road both east and west of the original project.
- At my instruction, City Engineering is also pursuing roundabout solutions to some of our most troublesome intersections. By no means will Greenwood become the next Carmel who must be trying for some type of world record....

But we will utilize the best and most innovative designs for our intersections going forward.

We can work to build the best system of roads in the State, but a system only continues to function if it is maintained.

- During snow events, Greenwood roads are the envy of our Central Indiana neighbors.
- During the spring, our staff quickly responds to online requests to fill potholes.
- In the fall, we make sure leaves and limbs are cleared with the utmost urgency.

In order to have some of the best serviced roads in the State, we have to keep investing in our equipment.

Since 2012, my administration has actively sought to replace and upgrade our fleet of vehicles and equipment. The Street Department has been one major area of focus. We've replaced more than half of our Dump Truck fleet, and during my second term, the goal is to replace all remaining Dump Trucks.

City Utilities are also an essential part of Greenwood's infrastructure base. During my transition in 2011, I quickly learned that our utilities infrastructure had some serious deferred maintenance and replacement issues which impaired the City's ability to comply with new regulations.

The problem was especially critical in the Sewer Utility.

Greenwood also had no dedicated stormwater management department to improve drainage and water quality issues throughout the City. Although it was not easy, my staff and the Common Council made significant strides in addressing these problems during the last few years.

The Common Council stepped up to the challenge and not only passed sustainable rates for the Sanitary Sewer Utility, but authorized the creation of the Stormwater Utility. The new rate structure and the new Utility allowed the City to start tackling its deferred maintenance and investment and create plans to comply with more stringent environmental regulations.

For example:

- Last year, the Sanitation department was able to replace a pipe on Pearl Street that was originally installed about a century ago.
- Currently, City staff is working on a program that would provide more than \$2.5 Million a year for pipe relining and sealing in both 2016 and 2017.
- The Sanitary Sewer Utility is also working on its biggest project since the completion of the Eastern Interceptor over a decade ago: A new Western Regional Interceptor. This new Interceptor will not only aid the Western part of our district, but ease capacity issues across the entire system.

Nearing its fourth birthday, the Stormwater Utility is proving to be an enormous asset to City ratepayers. We have identified and mapped more than \$50 Million in Stormwater assets net of depreciation. Until the Utility was created, there was no dedicated funding source to maintain this extremely valuable system.

Last summer, workers began the ambitious task of cleaning out storm drains that in most cases have never been cleaned. Each time workers remove a lost basketball, forgotten coke can, or pound of gravel from a drain, we limit future flooding issues, increase the life of our pipes, and improve water quality.

The Stormwater Board has a number of exciting projects in the works. A new rain garden is planned for the Greenwood Library and an innovative two-stage ditch is in the design stage for a low piece of land next to the Cobblestone development.

**Our third area of focus is Quality of Life.**

Amenities. Community parks. An exceptional aquatic center. Opportunities for all members of the family.

With the help of the Redevelopment Commission and the Park Board, Greenwood now has one of the best Aquatic Centers in the State. Freedom Springs is a perfect example of the unmet need for high quality amenities on the Southside. In its first year, Freedom Springs exceeded all expectations. We beat internal revenue and attendance goals and even managed to put a little money back into the Parks fund.

I often ask my good friend, Franklin Mayor Joe McGuiness, if he would like to compare the size of our community pools, but for some reason, he continues to be reluctant...

In effort to further improve our Parks and Recreation system, the Community Center will soon receive its first major remodel in over 20 years. At least \$2 Million will be spent updating the facility. The remodel will not only address long standing problems with HVAC systems and outdated bathrooms, but most importantly, it will completely repurpose the facility.

The fitness zones will be reimagined and moved from the second story to the first. Modern free weights will be added to the extensive cardiovascular machines the facility already possesses. Longer hours will allow our patrons many more opportunities to schedule their workouts around a busy life.

And while these are all great changes, I am most excited for what will happen on the west wing of the facility.

The west wing will feature a new indoor play zone for children and will replace office space and underused gathering spaces. This new space will provide all-season recreation activities for children and their families. Plans call for the installation of a multi-story climber that will allow children to climb two-stories in the air. New built-in play features will promote imaginative play and experiences suited for various age groups. Upstairs, the kid zone will feature more creative zones and activity centers that incorporate educational themes like STEM and music.



With the addition of a modern Community Center, Greenwood Parks and Recreation will be one the most comprehensive and diverse systems in the State:

- We have a state-of-the-art aquatic center.
- Greenwood possesses the only splash pad in Johnson County, and one of the few splash pads to be incorporated into an accessible all-seasons playground.
- Our amphitheater features free concerts all summer long and the added benefits of partnering with a local winery and brewer.
- We have a hidden gem in our community garden, where residents can rent affordable plots and grow produce and flowers.
- Northeast Park has a skate and roller blade park.
- University Park has a wooded dog park with agility features.
- Freedom Park has a large sledding hill that can accommodate scores of families.

Our downtown is experiencing a significant revival, with success stories like Revery, La Trattoria, Winchester Place, Coffeehouse Five and the Suds.

And thanks to our many community partners, we have a wonderful lineup of festivals and events. Freedom Fest, WAMM Fest, Halloween, Easter and Christmas parties, and additional plans to expand our offerings for 2016.

Add our park shelters, four play pockets (including a brand new firefighting themed playground at Station 91), the art trail, and over a dozen shelters, and I am confident that our Park System ranks among the very best for a city of Greenwood's size.

## **Our final pillar is Economic Development.**

Our City must continue to promote economic development within our City and region. It is critical that Greenwood foster a climate that allows business to invest, grow and expand. The most important, most successful, and unfortunately most misunderstood tool the City has to promote development are the TIF districts and RDC.

Greenwood is blessed to have extremely qualified and talented Redevelopment Commission members. I want to thank Brent Tilson, Mike Tapp, Bryan Harris, Don Cummings, and Mike Campbell who are working tirelessly to take the necessary steps to attract high-quality jobs and expand our tax base for the City, benefiting every citizen.

Each of our major TIF Districts are important to Greenwood's growth. Without the Fry Road allocation area, the City would have no funding source to make infrastructure improvements next to our largest tax payer - Simon Property Group. The Fry Road TIF covers the area around Greenwood Park Mall and is actively investing to ensure that the Mall and other retailers are provided with quality infrastructure that will promote reinvestment.

This includes:

- Reconstructing an aging lift station that provides sanitary sewer service to the area.
- An upgraded Fry Road, including funding for the recent multi-use trail extension on the road.

This year, the Fry Road TIF is committed to funding improvements at the intersection with State Road 135, including a new turn lane to cut down on wait times. Longer term, we hope to utilize funds to make improvements to the overgrown ditch behind the Mall and increase pedestrian and vehicular access to our largest district.

Speaking of 135, the new State Road 135 TIF will help the southwest side of Greenwood become a prime example of high-quality development. I commend the Common Council for their decision to create an overlay district to ensure proper development on the 135 Corridor.

But, the overlay is just one step in ensuring the area's success.

Converting an agricultural area to a high-end commercial and residential center takes both time and capital. Honey Creek Road, Stones Crossing Road, Cutsinger Road, and Smokey Row Road are just some of the many roads which need to be rebuilt in order for growth to flourish.

We need to acquire park land to provide new residents places to play with their children and experience the outdoors. We need multi-use trails so citizens can walk and ride their bikes from their neighborhoods to commercial districts and City Parks. Sewer and Stormwater systems will have to be expanded to meet the needs of growing business and neighborhoods.

Without the TIF, there is no way the City could fund these upgrades.

The Eastside TIF has been a true difference maker for the City, Johnson County, and the Greater Greenwood Region. Since its inception, the TIF has helped create more than \$300 Million in Assessed Value and the creation of hundreds of jobs.

National Trade Supply, one of Inc. Magazine's 500 Fastest Growing Companies, is located on infrastructure paid for by TIF dollars. The company ships water and HVAC filters across the country. Mays Chemical, Nestle Waters, Poynter Sheet Metal, Ortho Indy, and Ultra Distribution all depend on Eastside TIF infrastructure every day. Worthsville Road, Graham Road, Fire Station 94, Fire Engine 94, and Freedom Springs do not exist without the East Side TIF.

Because of these successes, it is imperative that the Common Council vote in favor of the new Worthsville Road TIF district when it is introduced later this year. Without the Worthsville TIF, the City will have no funding source to ensure that area has the proper infrastructure and amenities needed to drive economic development.

The Eastside TIF has also been utilized to jump start one of the City's most underappreciated assets: Greenwood Airport.

- We've built a new hangar.
- The taxiway has been completely refinished.
- And we constructed a new fence and sign at the airport's entrance.

Unfortunately, we did have to remove the much-loved Styrofoam cups...

These upgrades have all resulted in increased jet traffic, and we look forward to announcing even more initiatives in the coming weeks.

And then there is the city's downtown. Discussing Economic Development cannot take place without addressing our city's core and its historical importance. When I took office, Old Town Greenwood was on the endangered species list. Four years later, I can tell you that Old Town is not only stable, it is ready to grow.

Moving our offices to City Center is one of the decisions I am most proud of since taking office. As we remodeled the old NBG tower and redeveloped Pool Park into City Center Park, Old Town activists and investors knew they could invest their time and dollars without fear of the wrecking ball.

The cycle of investment in Old Town is just beginning. The new Downtown TIF will provide the capital to upgrade infrastructure, sidewalks and public spaces that downtowns need to thrive.

The facade grant program will drastically improve the look and feel of more than 20 building facades on Main and Madison. Additionally, I am directing my staff to create a second façade upgrade program that will continue to partner with private owners of key buildings, long after the original facades have been completed.

Pride and progress. There's a lot here to be proud of. A lot of progress has been made, and there's more to be done. Together, we can make Greenwood the best place to live, work and raise a family. An authentic place, a safe place, a place rooted in the past but looking to our future.

It's year five. Let's get to work.

Thank you.