

MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

State of the CITY

2018 Address - As Prepared

Thank you. Thank you and welcome. Thank you.

I am grateful that all of you could be here this afternoon for my Annual State of the City Address. I am proud to report that the State of our City is strong. It has been an honor and privilege to serve as Mayor during this special time in our City's history.

In our video, national CBS Evening News Anchor, Jeff Glor, framed our City's past, captured our resilience in the wake of great challenges, and articulated our collective belief that the best is yet to come in the City of Buffalo. I want to thank him for dedicating his time and talent to our program. Jeff is an Emmy-award winning journalist from Buffalo, who has traveled around the world and covered some of the biggest breaking news stories of the last decade. While doing that, he has always proudly reminded people - everywhere that he goes - exactly where he comes from. Thank you, Jeff.

And what a way to wake up this morning! Buffalo-born, Beauts Captain, Emily Pfalzer, leading Team USA to the Gold Medal in Women's Hockey for the first time in 20 years.

And once again, thank you to ALL of you - the changemakers who are here today. Together we have spent the last twelve years leading our City out of the past, and now, it is up to all of us to work together to determine our future.

The future is what I want to talk about today. I am proud of the way that we have re-imagined a City where people want to live and work and gather and celebrate, and enjoy Buffalo once again. Over the next four years, I will ensure that our progress continues and that opportunity is abundant in our City of Good Neighbors - that everyone has a chance to succeed, make a difference, and make their dreams a reality.

With billions in investment, we are stronger. With significant drops in crime, we are safer. With programs and services to care for and educate our children, we are smarter. And with a real commitment to improving City services, we are better.

This is our time.

I have no illusion that the next four years will be easy. To ensure our City's growth, we must continue to build - and sustain - modern buildings and infrastructure, as we revitalize the historic masterpieces and industrial sites that are scattered throughout the City of Buffalo.

Last summer, Tesla's Factory at RiverBend began manufacturing solar roof panels, and its partner, Panasonic, began building solar cells and modules. The two companies now employ over 500 local workers at the 1.2 million square foot facility in South Buffalo, where they expect to spend an additional 5 billion dollars over the next decade.

This milestone, made possible by Governor Andrew Cuomo's Buffalo Billion initiative, is one of many. As Governor Cuomo said: 'this marks the launch of a world-class manufacturing hub that will create jobs and solidify our role as a leader in the clean energy economy.' Thank you to Governor Cuomo and Lt. Governor Hochul for your leadership in our City's economic transformation.

Almost 1,000 people attended the Panasonic Job fair at the Buffalo Employment and Training Center, and Tesla will hold additional job fairs throughout the City starting in March. I would like the Tesla workers who are here today to please stand. Thank you for representing the future of manufacturing and for your commitment to the sustainability of our planet.

In November, Oishei Children's Hospital opened, with consolidated services in a new, modern facility on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. The hospital ensures that comprehensive pediatric health care and maternal services are available to patients from Western New York and beyond. It is one of only 43 freestanding children's hospitals in the United States; and the only one in New York.

The successful "Move Day", executed under the leadership and planning of Jody Lomeo, President and CEO of Kaleida Health and Oishei Children's Hospital President, Allegra Jaros, gave life to the new birthplace for the next generation of Buffalo's children.

And just a few weeks later, the University at Buffalo, Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, opened its doors 'to educate, to discover and to heal'. This institution will advance health and wellness around the world; educating tomorrow's leaders in healthcare, biomedical sciences, and innovative research.

This building is the first in Buffalo to have an internal NFTA metro rail station, and every day will bring more than 2,000 students, faculty and staff to the heart of downtown Buffalo. I would like to thank UB President Satish Tripathi for making this project a reality; and I would also like to recognize Jeremy Jacobs and his family, for their generosity – not just to UB – but to the entire City of Buffalo.

Then, the new Explore & More Children's Museum will "turn dreams into reality - the playful way!" Construction on the 43,000 square foot museum is well underway and will open this year. This will have a 90 million dollar economic impact over the next 10 years, and will be a perfect addition to Canalside - adding another attraction to our waterfront.

At the same time, the Albright Knox, is in the midst of a 155 million dollar expansion project. The museum conducted an international search that resulted in the selection of the world class architectural team O-M-A. And, one extraordinary benefactor, Jeffrey Gundlach, has inspired the capital campaign with personal contributions totaling 52.5 million dollars. Designs for the expansion will be unveiled this year, once again attracting worldwide attention to Buffalo's internationally recognized museum of modern art.

These are just a few of the examples of how our City is leading the way in manufacturing, energy, medicine, education, entertainment, and culture.
This is our time!

Our City is being re-discovered. Property values are rising and the growing equity will be a game changer for families. Businesses are expanding and there are more jobs. Greater investment in neighborhoods has increased commercial activity, and the years of abandonment and decline have steadily reversed.

It's time to ensure that our momentum continues. Our recovery is still fragile. Development is still heavily subsidized. We need to maintain affordable and safe housing. Many of our neighborhoods still have a long road to recovery. We must ensure public safety and the integrity of our infrastructure, while

maintaining the best standards for quality of life and the delivery of programs and services. We must continue to improve education. We need improved job training. And, we must continue to create more opportunity in every community for all of our residents.

It is gratifying to meet people every day who want to live here. This is one of the many indicators that our City is stronger. We worked hand in hand with residents, improving their neighborhoods, to the point where we now see an influx of new residents who want to be where the action is...right here in the City of Buffalo.

Many residents never expected to earn wealth by owning a home, but they are now positioned for economic advancement because they own some of the fastest appreciating property in the region. Now, residents throughout Buffalo are positioned to secure wealth by owning property.

But, as prices appreciate, we must protect those who have lived in Buffalo for generations, but are struggling. We still lack the jobs some of our residents need to actually afford the most affordable housing in the country. We've certainly made strides, but we need to continue expanding access to affordable housing.

My investment in affordable housing totals 450 million dollars to date, and there are more than 40 additional projects underway. We are also working with the development teams for 201 Ellicott, Women's & Children's Hospital, and Gates Circle, who have committed to affordable housing units in their projects. We will continue to prioritize support for projects that stabilize neighborhoods.

My commitment to inclusion and economic mobility does not stop with large multi-family developments.

Over the past year, my Administration has worked with Empire State Development, the NYS Affordable Housing Corporation, SONYMA, M&T Bank, and Habitat for Humanity on developing a new program for creating homeownership in Buffalo's abandoned properties.

Single and double family homes sold by the City will be eligible for a new type of mortgage from SONYMA that will include the cost of purchase and rehabilitation. Where rehab costs exceed the amount of the mortgage, my Administration has secured grant money from the State to cover the difference. Finally, those properties with the greatest rehab challenges will be tackled by Habitat for Humanity, ensuring that local homeowners will benefit from their investments.

Two years ago, my Administration commissioned the Housing Opportunity Strategy to develop a plan for inclusive development in Buffalo. 70,000 residential parcels in the City were surveyed, and all of the data was analyzed. This led to the creation of a framework that will guide our approach to development that will benefit long-time residents.

The Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency will lead a community engagement strategy that tailors solutions to neighborhood needs. The "Complete Community Initiative" is the next step in the Housing Opportunity Strategy. This complements the work of 'One Region Forward' - that's right - this will be a neighborhood strategy integrated into a regional agenda.

My Administration recognizes fair and affordable housing is a challenge for the region, not just for the City of Buffalo, so we have worked closely with my partner in government, Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz, to enter into an agreement - where for the first time in 40 years - the City and County are collaborating on a joint strategy for alleviating barriers to fair housing choice and enhancing affordable housing opportunities. Thank you County Executive Poloncarz, as well as my colleagues in the County Legislature, for your partnership on this and so many other initiatives.

My Administration will be implementing the Complete Community Initiative, while working with the State on the 60 million dollar commitment to the East Side of Buffalo - where we still have the greatest needs. Thank you, Governor Cuomo, and my colleagues in the state legislature, Senators Tim Kennedy and Chris Jacobs, and Assembly Members Crystal Peoples-Stokes and Sean Ryan for your steadfast support in the Buffalo Billion 2.

My goal is to forge an atmosphere in Buffalo that creates mixed income neighborhoods, where every resident feels at home and can thrive. I know that this objective is shared by my partners in the Common Council. I want to thank them for their leadership on this and so many other important issues. Council President Pridgen, Majority Leader Rivera, Council President Pro Tem Scanlon, and Council Members Franczyk, Fontana, Golombek, Wyatt, Feroletto and Wingo - thank you for being here today.

Our objective is to position Buffalo as one of the most inclusive and equitable cities in North America. This is the right thing to do for our residents and for our economy.

We must continue to develop a healthy City, by expanding programs to combat lead poisoning. With the support of the Common Council, we enacted tougher codes to hold landlords and property managers accountable for providing tenants with lead-safe dwellings. Our City building inspectors conducted “blitzes” in four Buffalo neighborhoods where children have tested highest for lead. Those resulted in violations and/or fines at over 500 structures. Landlords who didn’t achieve compliance were referred to Housing Court.

We have enhanced our effort to wipe-out lead in Buffalo by increasing the Rental Registry fee, so that revenues will enable us to hire a coordinator, solely devoted to preventing lead exposure, who will oversee our comprehensive lead program, and will serve as our liaison with county, state and federal government agencies, and not-for-profits, to leverage all available resources to increase lead testing, abatement and education.

Neighborhood recovery has been underway across the City of Buffalo in every District. We must continue to build on that, even as we tackle new frontiers.

I am proud to announce that Northwest Savings Bank is coming to Jefferson Avenue! After evaluating their branch network, it was clear that something was missing - a location on the East Side of Buffalo. They were impressed with the public investment and exciting projects underway in this historic corridor, and they decided this would be the new home for a full-service branch. Northwest will break ground this spring and open this year.

I’m also pleased to announce that Northwest Bank is partnering with Mike Riegel and his team at Belmont Housing to open a Financial Education Center on Jefferson Avenue. Clients will have access to one-on-one counseling, workshops and online courses on a variety of financial topics. This center will open in 2019. Northwest Bank has been a great partner to the City of Buffalo – I would like to ask Northwest Regional President John Golding and his team to please stand - I am grateful for your confidence in the future of our local economy and the growing strength of this neighborhood. Thank you very much.

In partnership with Brian Gelfand, President and CEO of Blue Wireless, I’m also pleased to report that JEF-FREE WIFI will be expanded by ten blocks in the Jefferson Avenue Business District to include hotspot access points from East Ferry Street to Best Street. JEF-FREE WI-FI is the next phase of Buffalo’s public wireless network. Thank you, Brian.

In reaching for the next level, we must build our public-private partnerships. Next week, Dr. Daniel Alexander - who is here today - will be submitting his plans for a new community center for the Seneca-

Babcock neighborhood. He will purchase land from the City of Buffalo to build a 2.6 million dollar, privately-run and funded community center. The City made the initial investment to prepare the site for sale, and will use the proceeds from the purchase to improve Mullen Park. The center's costs and long-term operational sustainability will be paid for through the fundraising efforts and generous contributions of Dr. Daniel Alexander.

The final component for real recovery is dealing with vacant buildings that prevent the complete transformation of our neighborhoods. At the corner of Hertel and Delaware Avenues, the conversion of the former North Buffalo Library into an Italian Cultural Center is about to take place. The City will invest 350,000 dollars to preserve the historic elements of this building. An additional 1.3 million dollars has been raised by the Italian Cultural Center from private donations and outside sources - including the utilization of historic tax credits. This privately owned and operated building will become a permanent cornerstone for Buffalo's Little Italy and the surrounding community.

Marrano Homes plans to spend 40 million dollars converting 23-acres between Colvin and Starin in North Buffalo into more than 100 single family homes. This will add to the growing vibrancy of North Buffalo and contribute nearly 1 million dollars to the City's tax base annually.

All of these projects demonstrate my commitment to developing new ways to revitalize neighborhoods and lessen the burden on taxpayers by leveraging private resources for construction and long-term operation of public facilities.

In order for any neighborhood to be strong, it has to be safe. The Buffalo Fire and Police Departments work to ensure that our bravest and finest are a diverse group of men and women who engage with our community every day in a positive manner.

Last month, I appointed Commissioner Vincent Muscarella, a firefighter who rose through the ranks in the Buffalo Fire Department, who brings a wealth of experience, expertise, and training, to this job, as well as strong relationships in the Department and with Buffalo Firefighters, Local 282.

Currently, there is a class of new firefighters in training, and we have just begun a recruitment campaign for the next class, which will begin training by Fall. Applications for the Fire Exam - which will be administered on May 1st - are available right now.

Our Buffalo Police Department has worked very hard for the 40% drop in crime that has been achieved since I took office. It has removed over 15,600 illegal guns from our streets at a time when we become more painfully aware of the devastation of gun violence across our nation every day.

I will be joining students from across our nation in the "March For Our Lives," and I will sponsor buses so that young people from Buffalo have the opportunity on March 24th to lend their voices – to what must be a deafening chorus of NEVER AGAIN. I expect that we will be greeted by our outstanding United States Senators, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Kristen Gillibrand.

I am proud to announce today that I have nominated Interim Police Commissioner Byron C. Lockwood to permanently lead the Buffalo Police Department as Commissioner. I know that he's the right person for this job. His distinguished career in law enforcement and strong relationships within the Department and in our community, along with his integrity, hard work, and love for our City and our Police Department will make our neighborhoods safer, our Department stronger, and will deepen the bonds between the police and the community. He has played a major role in collaborative efforts with other law enforcement agencies, including the office of District Attorney John Flynn, and he has worked closely with the Police Athletic League, Peacemakers and the Concerned Clergy Coalition, who are all here today.

A smooth transition is important, because I've tasked Commissioner Lockwood with achieving full accreditation by New York State within the year. This is an ambitious goal, but I'm confident that with the support of his leadership team, this will be accomplished. Our officers deserve the best equipment, training and technology available. We recently began a pilot-program to test body camera technology, and we continue to expand the SafeCam program, with nearly 250 city surveillance cameras, and hundreds of private cameras owned by participating residents and businesses.

As we grow in size and popularity the number of large-scale events and visitors increases. I have asked our police department to focus on quality of life concerns and respond to resident complaints in every neighborhood. We will be increasing traffic enforcement activities, doubling our truck enforcement detail and implementing new measures to ensure public safety at large events.

Our police contribute so much to our community in so many different ways. I would ask that you please join me in a round of applause for our Honor Guard and for Police Officer Gaisha Wilson, who opened our program today.

Improving the essential services that residents expect from government remains a top priority. My vision for a centralized Public Works Campus that improves service delivery – including snow removal, paving and garbage collection - while achieving cost savings and energy efficiency - is one step closer toward realization. A site has been selected to build the Campus that we will announce in the coming months. The funding for Phase 1 of this project is included in our Capital Plan.

I'm also committed to leadership at the local level in the area of climate change, which is absent at the federal level. We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and I've committed to the US Climate Mayor's Pledge to achieve this by developing a Climate Action Plan for Buffalo. We are also upgrading to more energy efficient and alternative fuel vehicles; enhancing our 34 & More recycling campaign; planting more trees; and building solar installations at public facilities.

I also am proud to report that we've reached the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan goal of installing 150 miles of bike lanes. I'd like to thank our Public Works Department for this achievement.

As a world class cultural center, we've brought public spaces to life with art. In the coming months, the Buffalo Arts Commission will bring more artwork to Allen Street, Niagara Street and the Northland Corridor.

And, as we celebrate Black History Month, we remember "African Americans in Times of War". I am honored to reaffirm my support for the installation of an African American Veterans Monument at the Buffalo & Erie County Naval Park, a concept of Assembly Member Crystal Peoples-Stokes, who has secured 650 thousand dollars for this important project.

I'm also pleased to share the news that BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York is a finalist for the prestigious Corporate Social Responsibility Award for their partnership with the City of Buffalo on 'Summer City Fitness'. These awards showcase inspiring and impactful corporate social responsibility initiatives that are improving communities. My thanks to David Anderson, President and CEO of BlueCross BlueShield, for his commitment to this program at Martin Luther King Park.

Residents of the Fruitbelt, working with Council President Pridgen, the Buffalo Public Schools, and my newly appointed Commissioner of Community Services, Otis T. Barker, have come to an agreement that will impact this neighborhood by establishing a one-stop resource center for educational, recreational and vocational programs that will be available to the Fruitbelt community at Public School 37.

Finally, I'm excited to announce that my Administration and the Buffalo Police Athletic League, have reached an agreement to supplement programming at city-operated recreation centers, as well as to extend programming for evenings, during summer break and on weekends year-round. This will build on the strong relationship between the City and the Police Athletic League, continuing an effective partnership that expands our ability to provide children with supervised and organized activities, programs and events.

Ensuring that our City's young people receive a quality education through targeted, forward-thinking programs, like the 'New Education Bargain', is a serious responsibility that extends beyond the confines of the classroom and through the calendar year. Under the leadership of Buffalo Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Kriner Cash, we continue to see improvement across all scholastic metrics. Graduation rates and attendance rates have increased, and there has been real success in closing the achievement gap. Major declines in high school dropout rates based on race reflect the impact of programs including the 'Boys and Men of Color Initiative' and 'Breaking Barriers.'

The City of Buffalo provides significant support to the Buffalo Public Schools and 'Say Yes Buffalo', and their work has resulted in the successful matriculation of 65% of public school graduates who apply for two and four-year colleges and universities.

My Summer Reading Challenge is still going strong - now in its 17th year - with over 17,000 champion readers, who have read almost 100,000 books. And my 'Summer Youth Employment and Internship Program' is stronger than ever. With our nearly 2 million dollar annual commitment - and tremendous support from businesses and organizations across the City - more than 22,000 job opportunities have been offered to our youth! Applications for this summer are available now from our Division of Community Services.

Education is the solution, but in our technological world, the resources necessary to excel remain out of reach for many. The 'Sprint 1Million Project' is expanding Internet access to Buffalo Public School students who didn't have it before. Wireless devices are being distributed, and free high-speed Internet services are being provided to students, so that after the school day's closing bell, they can complete their homework, expand their horizons and unlock their full potential. This partnership between the City, the Buffalo Public Schools and Sprint will level the playing field for thousands of our students.

Today, I'm pleased to announce that we will continue to foster a new generation of earth-friendly youth, as we officially launch the new Environmental Champions Program. This is another partnership between the City and the Buffalo Public Schools, encouraging students and teachers to become Environmental Champions, by creating effective recycling campaigns at school. Classes will win prizes for creativity in successfully promoting recycling at school.

In all of our endeavors, we also have strong partners in our Colleges and Universities. I would like to recognize the presidents of all of our colleges and universities who are here today. I would ask them to please stand and be recognized.

As our progress continues on the Workforce Training Center at Northland, which will open in August, we will focus on the further redevelopment of the Northland Corridor as an expanding opportunity hub by announcing several projects.

My administration has been working in partnership with Empire State Development to establish an agreement with a national leader in designing industry-specific courses to meet our region's IT needs, who will then provide professional development training to students at the 'Coding School at Northland.' This will provide education for transformative technology careers as part of our ongoing opportunity agenda.

We will help close the skills divide and build a more diverse technical workforce.

Another new component of the Northland Corridor will be a 10,000 square foot facility that will be used for training stagehands and theatrical employees who work in all forms of live theater, motion picture and television production. Here, students will be trained for work in the entertainment industry, in partnership with John Ford, President of International Association of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 52. This strategic investment builds on the growing success of Buffalo's film industry, which last year alone generated a 42 million dollar impact in the local economy.

Finally, Project Rainfall will be a food system social enterprise, in a low-income area, historically underserved when it comes to accessing fresh and healthy food options.

Project Rainfall – a vision of Rita Hubbard-Robinson - has been adopted as a priority project by the national 'Invest Health Initiative', a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation program. The partners in this coalition are led by the P2 Collaborative, and include the City of Buffalo, ECMC, UB and Buffalo Urban Development Corporation. The facility will provide fresh produce to the community, and training and employment opportunities for residents, with a focus on health and wellness.

Our Office of New Americans continues to ensure that every new resident of our City has dignity, hope, opportunity, and security. People from around the world look to us for the chance to build a new life. During this time of great uncertainty and fear among immigrants and their families, we are a welcoming City that recognizes the valuable contributions of our newcomers.

I would like to thank Administrative Judge Paula Feroletto and her distinguished colleagues in the judiciary, who are here today, for all of their work on ensuring access and justice for our New Americans.

I would like to thank the New Americans who opened our program today- members of an adult ESL Class from Jewish Family Services of Buffalo and Erie County - and their instructor, Ms. Maria "Apple" Domingo. Your journeys have been long – from Angola, Burma/Myanmar, Burundi, Columbia, Congo, the Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Mexico, Moldova, Sudan and Syria. We welcome you to our City of Good Neighbors and thank you for participating in this very special event.

I'm also pleased to announce that we will be utilizing a new electronic tracking system that provides data to track contractor utilization of minority- and women-owned businesses on City projects. We've entered into an agreement with LCP Tracker – a labor compliance software company. This allows us to best monitor our progress to goals, and achieve the aggressive standards set by Governor Cuomo and my Administration, of awarding 30% of our contracts to minority and women owned businesses.

As we continue to build a City of Opportunity, we also need to enhance efficiency through our use of technology.

I am pleased to announce that Open Data Buffalo has successfully launched a portal designed to empower the City to use data to further improve the quality of life for our residents and enhance the efficiency and transparency of our operations.

In conjunction with this, we are partnering with AT&T on the 'Buffalo Civic Innovation Challenge'. This competition will inspire innovative, technological solutions to overcome challenges. The competition requires individuals or teams of tech students in our community to generate ideas and submit a working prototype for a solution that uses data from the portal, 311, Buffalo Roam, and more, to improve quality of life in Buffalo. This will provide opportunities for data scientists, coders and developers to create new technologies to positively impact our community and strengthen our local innovation economy.

This is also the time to work together to be more efficient and effective in our delivery of services. I am grateful that Kaleida Health, the largest healthcare provider and employer in WNY, led by Jody Lomeo and his technical team, have been working with my office on an innovative public-private partnership that will transform the way that the City manages our information systems and partners with stakeholders across our community to most efficiently and effectively communicate with and provide services to our residents. This is something I am very excited about!

Our next step will be hiring a new Chief Information Officer, Dr. Luis Taveras, who after a long tenure at IBM, went on to serve as a partner at Accenture, and then as CIO at Hartford Healthcare and Barnabas Health, where he recently retired as Senior Vice President for the Office of Integration. Dr. Taveras is an established leader in this field, who will develop a strategic plan for restructuring our MIS Department to improve the efficiency of the City and deliver more value to our residents. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Taveras!

The year 2018 marks some very important milestones for our City's most venerable institutions.

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy has begun a yearlong celebration of our nation's first system of parks and historic parkways, commemorating the 150th Anniversary of our world-class park system. Congratulations to the Olmsted Conservancy Board and staff on the sesquicentennial birthday celebration of an urban masterpiece.

Congratulations to Erie County Medical Center, President and CEO Tom Quatroche and Board Chair Jon Dandes, on your 100th Anniversary. After the "City Hospital" at Grider Street opened as a public general hospital, the School of Nursing was founded and became the first diploma nursing school in Buffalo to racially integrate students and admit men. The transformation of an 82-acre farm on Buffalo's East Side into a healthcare campus opened a century of delivering quality medical care that continues today at ECMC.

The exciting plans to build a new state-of-the-art, expanded Emergency Department, are well underway, making this an even more exciting 100th Anniversary of 'true care'.

Next month, we say 'Bon Voyage!' to the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra as it embarks on an international tour and becomes the first full American orchestra to perform at the prestigious Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival in Poland. Maestro JoAnn Falletta makes history too, as the first American woman to conduct an orchestra at this event. Congratulations!

As I have said many times, the greatest strength of our City is our people.

Our families come together - as one - in times of celebration and mourning. They are our strength, and the pillars of our community. Please let me take one more moment to acknowledge Reverend Blue and Father Joe, for their blessings upon all of us today, and to express my gratitude to my wonderful family, especially my wife Michelle and my son Byron - thank you for your constant love and support.

As we look back at 2017, there were several examples of our community coming together in the wake of tragedy and triumph. From each of these, a beautiful expression of support and solidarity emerged from the darkness.

From City Hall to the Electric Tower, One Seneca Tower to the U.S. District Courthouse, and so many other points in between and beyond, Buffalo's iconic buildings and structures are making a statement at night. As a result of this beautiful collaboration, I am forming Buffalo LIT (a Landmark Illumination Team) so that these expressions of support can be coordinated as a unified beacon symbolizing what we

have, what we hope for, and what we've lost. I am asking all of the entities that illuminate our skyline to join our team.

Last year, we laid fallen Officer Craig E. Lehner to rest, and as our City mourned, it was bathed in blue.

Today, I am privileged to posthumously promote Officer Lehner to the rank of Lieutenant in the Buffalo Police Department in recognition of his outstanding service as a Buffalo Police K-9 Officer and a member of the Underwater Rescue and Recovery Team.

I am pleased to share the news that Lieutenant Lehner's beloved K-9 Shield has a new partner in the Buffalo Police Department.

And, in May, we will officially re-name the Buffalo Police K-9 Training Facility on Louisiana Street in memory of Lieutenant Lehner. This facility has undergone significant interior and exterior upgrades, thanks to a generous donation from the Home Depot Foundation, and the hard work of the 'Women in Leadership Team Depot', who have been transforming this site into a state-of-the-art K-9 training facility, and who are here with us today.

When we work together and accomplish great things our City Hall Dome is often illuminated in red, white and blue.

This was so, as history was made in Buffalo, when for the first time in the Navy's 242 year history, a new warship was commissioned alongside its namesake, the USS Little Rock. I had the honor of presenting a Key to the City of Buffalo to the Commander and crew of this vessel, in recognition of this historic event. Wherever the USS Little Rock travels, near and far, she takes with her a lasting reminder of her connection with the City of Buffalo.

We were also red, white and blue in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, whose destructive force left the entire island of Puerto Rico without power or access to basic services including electricity, food and water. Buffalonians came together – proving once again that the generosity of our City of Good Neighbors extends well beyond our City's borders.

We established The Puerto Rico - Hurricane Maria - Relief Fund and partnered with our friends at M&T Bank to raise tens of thousands of dollars in monetary donations and collected food, water, and non-perishable necessities. We embraced the families who sought sanctuary in the City of Buffalo, and launched an effort to help ease the burden of transition, while welcoming all with open arms and outstretched hands.

And upon the passing of one of our City's great luminaries, Buffalo was bathed in "M&T Green" in honor of Bob Wilmers.

He was an original, one of a kind, irreplaceable.

He was devoted to his family, our community and to M&T Bank. He was generous, competitive, confident and passionate.

He was someone who got things done and made things happen.

He was my friend.

I miss his advice, his humor, his wry smile, and the twinkle in his eye.

But for all of us who knew Bob, he will live on in our hearts and minds, and the good things we do for family and community.

I am so glad that so many members of Bob's M&T family could be here today, including Chairman of the Board and CEO René Jones and President and COO Richard Gold.

As Mayor of the City of Buffalo, and on behalf of its residents, it is my honor today to posthumously award the Key to the City of Buffalo to Robert G. Wilmers, because a great City honors and remembers the legacy of our visionaries, our leaders, our benefactors, and our champions. We miss you Bob.

Now, as I conclude, I believe that we must enter our next phase with the belief that the worst is behind us; with the optimism that we can do anything; with the patience and with the understanding that all good things take time; with the persistence of the generations who never left, but who never lived to see anything like this; with the planning and the artistry that yields things that are beautiful and enduring; and with the willingness to contribute and to sacrifice, because all of our resources are required to do what is right. Our responsibilities are great, but our City is one that has endured as a symbol of fortitude, perseverance and pride.

We are the Queen City.

And Buffalo: this IS our time.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the City of Buffalo.