

Good afternoon and welcome.

Where's the speech? .... [UAS Delivers Binder to stage]

Thank you to Sergeant Thatcher and the Red River/Central Jr. ROTC Color Guard. Let's give them a hand and let's take this moment to recognize all our active and retired service men and women, as well as our Veterans.

Would you please stand and be recognized.

Today, let's talk about Working Together to be Our Best.

Our fundamental services are the best.

Our economy is strong and growing.

Our partnerships have never been stronger.

Our efforts to create a vibrant Destination City are paying off.

And we have both challenges and opportunities we can clearly lay out.

I love Grand Forks.

I know I'm not alone.

But more than just feeling the love, we must be vocal, active champions of Grand Forks.

Today we start building a team of passionate, spirited Grand Forks fans.

But , before I get started, let me say a few important thank you's.

Thank you to the Chamber. Barry and the whole team, you've helped create a great partnership between the city and the business community.

Thank you to my family. My wife, Ann, son Grady and my newly married daughter, Michaela and son-in-law, Brooks.

Thank you to our partners from East Grand Forks, Grand Forks County, the Grand Forks School District and Park District, and all of our local ND Legislators. How about a hand for our partners?

Thanks to all the sponsors and, of course, to you all for attending.

And of course, thank you to our City Council members – Dana Sande, Ken Vein, Bret Weber, Doug Christensen, Terry Bjerke, Crystal Schneider and Jeannie Mock.

On behalf of the community, I want to recognize that after decades of incredible work for the city and citizens of Grand Forks, Mr. Christensen and Mr. Bjerke are stepping away from the Council. Thank you for your service.

As I said earlier: Our goal is achieving our best and this is easier when we work together.

That takes a lot of different efforts but it starts with the basics.

We can't do anything else until we deliver the best services with the best employees around.

And we do.

Some of the highlights of 2015 achievements are on your tables. I am proud of the services we deliver. You should be too.

My thanks to City Administrator, Todd Feland, and Department Heads for your leadership in making sure the "blocking and tackling" is being taken care of and we are heading in the right direction.

And we are, indeed, heading in the right direction.

Let's start with the bottom line.

Through the budgets I put forth and adopted by the City Council, the City cut just under 4 mills last year and just over 11 mills the last 2 years which has resulted in no tax increase from the City.

The effective tax rate for residential property is 1.29%. That's down from 1.3% last year and 1.57% in 2013 and blowing past the goal I set several years ago of 2.1%.

That's not all City action, that's all our taxing entities and especially State. The point is, we're all working in the same direction: Affordability.

And we're saving in other places.

This year we refinanced the Alerus Center and Sanitation bonds for over 600 thousand dollars a year in savings and saved about 100 thousand dollars annually on our flood insurance and a new “text to 911” system.

Efficiency also takes the form of new internal systems, restructured departments, multi-departmental collaborations, combined labs and use of the newest technology.

A culture of efficiency pervades all our departments, but it is keenest with our “award winning” Finance Department team. They are a solid and consistent team that we rely on year in and year out, for good reason.

After all, being “an affordable place to live and do business” is one of our five pillars of the Grand Forks Promise.

The other pillars are:

- 2) Safe Community,
- 3) Commitment to Young People,
- 4) Healthy and Recreational Experiences, and
- 5) Opportunities to be Engaged.

We’re keeping that Promise.

After Affordability, our next Grand Forks Promise pillar is Safety.

Safety is a trademark of our community. We’re making sure it stays that way.

Recent events remind us that a safe community cannot be taken for granted. Our hearts are with the Fargo community and Officer Moszer’s family.

It also reminds us we cannot say thank you enough to our public safety professionals.

So, again: Thank you.

In 2015, our 911 center processed over 120,000 calls, our Police responded to nearly 41,000 calls for service and our Fire fighters hustled to fire calls in under 4 minutes nearly three quarters of the time.

Joining the ranks, we have hired new public safety personnel, including 12 new fire fighters supporting new Station 5 who are here with us today.

Also joining the ranks is City and County Emergency Manager, Kari Goetz.

It’s important to note our reach extends beyond our community.

Our police also were among the first in the region to implement body cameras and serve as a model for other communities.

We are working to help provide fire protection at the Airport and at Grand Sky Development, as well as working with state, federal and private officials to develop a "Crude by Rail" training site.

We keep our forces strong by making investments in our people and their resources.

And we will continue to do so.

For example, we need to get a raised "911 fee" to a public vote. Because of how the fee is collected with mobile phones, the revenue is simply not covering needs.

The people picking up their phones in the worst of times deserve the best of resources.

Our next Grand Forks Promise pillar is our "Commitment to Young People".

On this we partner with the best Park and School Districts around and with a variety of community-wide partners.

The Grand Forks Youth Commission continues to Support our Troops, give important voice to youth on community issues, and model leadership skills.

I want to thank the commissioners, some here today, and our facilitator, Sarah Shimek.

And I love what I see with Safer Tomorrows. This county-wide collaboration to end childhood exposure to violence is having real impact by promoting a culture that makes kids safer today, ends cycles of violence, and averts violent acts, trauma and costs in the future.

We also share the work to open windows of opportunity and develop empathy through our ongoing International efforts with Friendship City Kanuma, Japan and Sister City Sarpsborg, Norway.

As you can see, our relationship with the School District is critical and I'm pleased we are working together on issues like downtown parking and developing new neighborhoods.

Our next pillar is Health and Recreation and we have the very best team when it comes to Public Health.

In addition to directly reaching over 15,000 residents through nursing, nutrition, home visitation, tobacco cessation and immunization services,

- Really, the flu shot doesn't hurt –

our Public Health Team provides over 1,000 inspections and evaluations that help keep us safe.

Our Public Health team is also responsible for the outstanding work to keep mosquitoes at bay and improving both community health and quality of life.

And after decades of effort, we have a path forward to providing Social Detox. This was the result of strong leadership and trusted partners addressing community needs through collaboration.

Nice work. In fact, collaboration is a Grand Forks calling card.

It is exemplified by the nationally renowned YMCA and Choice Health & Fitness partnership or the equally innovative Valley Community Health Center partnership.

It is also marked by grass roots initiatives with Altru Health System, Partners for a Healthy Grand Forks, and the Healthy Grand Forks Coalition.

Whether it's the United Way, the Non-Profit Business Alliance, the Commission on Social Infrastructure, or our new Team Grand Forks Human Services effort, we put a focus on people and work together.

And into the future we will need this strong team as we continue to focus on critical community issues before us like mental health, opioids and addiction, and overall affordability.

Another thing we can't forget is that our non-profits employ nearly 4,000 people and create an investment of wages and outside funding of \$200 million.

Our non-profits not only do great work, but do great business.

Whether indoors or out, Grand Forks is bursting with recreational experiences.

Of course, the Greenway is the center piece of recreation and we make sure it stays that way with the best in programming and maintenance thanks to our Greenway staff.

Our community boasts events like the Uffda Mud Run, Inline Skate Marathon and the Wild Hog race that is expanding to a full marathon this year and events that embrace winter like the Holly Dazzle Parade, the Downtown Ice Rink, the Ice Man Triathlon, and the Frozen Feet 5k, as well as the triumphant return of the Frosty Bobber thanks to the Grand Forks Young Professionals.

The last pillar of our Grand Forks Promise is: Engagement.

We're making valuable inroads on engagement and this year will bring more.

Let me first start with a recognition of our outstanding Human Resources team.

Engagement is a 'people' thing and our HR professionals have strengthened our city team by handling turnover and implementing training, education and professional development over the last year.

We've had a robust effort to increase resident contact and public engagement with vibrancy listening sessions, Coffee with a Cop and a robust social and electronic media plan.

For example, we have over 1,300 requests made - and responded to – through our GF311 app and a growing number of *NextDoor* users.

So when you see an issue, we are right at your fingertips.

If you haven't downloaded the GF311 app or NextDoor – free at your Android and AppStore - do it now. Many of you are on your cell phones anyway, right?

Speaking of engagement, there's no better way of bringing people together than a 21<sup>st</sup> century library.

Grand Forks needs and deserves a new library in a new location.

Over the next few months our community should perform due diligence on the details of the final two proposed locations, downtown and midtown.

We should be ready to identify the final location in 2016 and follow through with a full funding plan and, if necessary, a vote on public funding.

Our library is, after all, public infrastructure.

Not unlike the public infrastructure competently managed by our Public Works and Engineering teams.

First of all, I'm proud of our team when it comes to clearing the snow from the just under 800 lane miles of roadways with each winter storm.

I'm also grateful we can be confident our water is available and safe.

Recent national events remind us to take note of how our city is not crippled by an inch of snow and how well our water system works.

Although road construction slows us down, we know it is critical.

Last year's significant road projects included major extensions on Washington and Columbia, as well as the reconditioning of the Sorlie Bridge.

How about that splash of color in our community's downtown with the addition of the Sorlie lights?

If you haven't seen them, take a drive or go for a walk downtown. They're lovely.

This year we will reconstruct 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue South from the drain way to 20<sup>th</sup> St. and Columbia Road from 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue South.

We've all been waiting for this. I know I have.

Again, our road maintenance crews do a fantastic job with the resources they have.

The challenge we have – and this is the first challenge I want to highlight today - is the magnitude of general road repairs and the incredible costs associated.

We recently opened bids for this project and the good news is they came in under estimates. The bad news is that it is still a \$4.5 million expense. That means this type of road repair costs more than \$1 million per block.

We need real resources to address this challenge.

So here's what we're going to do: We're going to perform a full assessment on road quality and publish the results as actual grades on our website.

Next, we will identify a 10 year plan to get them up to our shared standards. Finally, we will seek the revenue source that makes sure it is an 'action' plan.

With that said, the first challenge – improving our roads – is tied to our second\_challenge: Major future infrastructure.

They are tied by the need for significant, locally-controlled funding.

With locally-controlled funding we are being proactive and taking our destiny into our own hands.

We have a sound history of being proactive and action-oriented on infrastructure.

The City and partners are implementing a Strategic Infrastructure Investment Program.

We are also prioritizing new growth areas with \$15 million from the new State Revolving Loan Program, investing Growth Fund resources for primary sector related developments, and leveraging state assistance for water infrastructure.

This is a good point to acknowledge the success on the legislative front including the Legislative committee and Team Grand Forks.

We also have ample reason to say thank you to Governor Dalrymple and the Legislative Assembly – with a special note to our local legislators and Sen. Holmberg in particular.

Our Team Grand Forks, did well with state funding.

In addition to the \$65M committed for the Water Treatment Plant, State investment includes funding for Grand Sky, the Safety Training Center, and significant investments on the UND campus including the Medical School, Law school, and the new Collaborative Energy Complex.

We will continue to work with our federal and state partners for resource assistance.

But let's also be clear that our future is tended to best when we tend to it ourselves.

When it comes to infrastructure, both road maintenance and major projects, like the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and DeMers underpass and the 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue South Interchange, require local funding with local control.

That's why over the next few months we will facilitate a community conversation about a new infrastructure sales tax.

We've created master plans and now we need the community to engage.

The questions to be asked and answer include how much is needed, how will it be allocated and how long would it need to last?

We must focus on maintenance and future investment now so we perpetuate a strong economy with ongoing private sector investments.

Despite significant economic challenges including a strained federal budget, new constraints on our state budget, a concerning Ag market and a low Canadian dollar, we are still doing well.

In fact, our strong economy continues to attract substantial investment.



Grand Forks is a good place to do business.

The 2015 value of construction was an impressive 203 million dollars compared with a 10 year average of about 140 million dollars.

The 433 housing units constructed was only slightly less than the twelve year average of 450.

Last year, the airport handled nearly 300,000 passengers and 53 million pounds of cargo.

Ryan Reisinger is the new Airport Authority Executive Director and we work hand in hand with the airport. Welcome Ryan and to your family.

Amid our region's strong economy, we reinforce the importance of primary sector business development.

At the helm and always generating confidence is the Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corporation and the unparalleled leadership of Klaus Thiessen and Keith Lund, and our UAS expert, Terry Sando.

As a major project in development, we continue to see progress on Northern Plains Nitrogen and our team is working closely with theirs. I'm optimistic about NPN and I expect we'll know more by this Fall.

Just a few more examples of investment confidence include: Corporate headquarters and expansions at FedEx Ground, ACME, PS Doors and LM Windpower.

It includes a wonderful investment by AgCountry west of I-29 and near that a plan for a beautiful new Minnkota campus.

In downtown we have new residential developments, a full Corporate Center with longtime anchor Alerus Financial, an expanded Brady Martz, and a full Edgewood Corporate Center downtown – Cheers and warm welcome to Sky's.

We have also moved forward with an exciting new project with East Grand Forks: The Wastewater Interconnect.

This is an unprecedented partnership that took years to realize and now is recognized by the Minnesota Legislature as a model joint project.

And at the UND Tech Accelerator we're seeing cutting edge startup collaborations, like EdgeData, a new data startup. They are partnering with one of our largest manufacturing

employers, LM Windpower and Sky Skopes, an innovative new UAS company (and speech deliverer!)

Which brings us to UAS and the great past success and current potential in this sector.

Of course, the major 2015 news was the ground breakings at Grand Sky by Northrup Grumman and General Atomics, thanks to the 2015 culmination of the County's lease with the Air Force Base and the completion of the first phase of construction at Grand Sky.

Representatives of our major partners, Northrup Grumman and General Atomics, are here today so I want to say a special welcome and thank you.

Grand Forks is the epicenter of UAS.

In fact, UAS is the perfect example of federal, state, regional, local and private-public partnerships that are defining not just the strength of our economy, but its diversity.

But don't just take my word for it. . .

---

#### **Video One – Booming Business & Industry**

*Gov. Jack Dalrymple: Working with Mayor Brown & other leaders, we are accomplishing a great deal in the Grand Forks area. You are becoming the nation's #1 destination for UAS research & development thanks to \$10 million in state support. The state is also a major partner in your base retention efforts. We are also pleased to come through with \$60 million for a new water treatment plant and providing millions more in low interest loans for infrastructure projects.*

*ND Senator John Hoeven: We've worked hard to build the Grand Forks region into a premiere hub, as one of the only six test sites across the nation, Grand Forks in partnership with the FAA is leading the way in integrating our air space so both manned & unmanned aircraft can safely fly together.*

*ND Senator Heidi Heitkamp: Grand Forks & the entire Red River Valley are creating a vibrant business community & that is the envy of the nation from the state of art Grand Sky businesses & Technology Park to wind energy companies that are leading the nation in renewables. It's all because Grand Forks is so skilled at collaborating with businesses, military installations, the community & Federal partners.*

*ND Representative Kevin Cramer: As I look at Grand Forks from Washington it's looking awfully good. You all enjoy a very good reputation in Washington & that's not true of everybody or everyplace but it is true of Grand Forks.*

*Fargo Mayor Tim Mahoney: Valley Prosperity has helped us because of many areas where Grand Forks & Fargo have mutual concerns what we need to do. We want to work on water from the West to come to the East & it is a great way to collaborate with Grand Forks & figure out how to do that. Both of us are economic engines in the eastern part of the state that we need a variety of things to work well. Mayor Brown & I work real well together on many issues & it's great to have that partnership when you go out to the Legislative body & ask for either funding or programs or things we need to do.*

*Co-Chair VPP Tammy Miller: The Valley Prosperity Partnership was inspired by Bill Marcil. Today it consists of members from the Economic Development Corporations, from our research communities & many from private industry. The group has come together to tackle issues that we cannot work on individually but collectively we can work on them together & make our region better for all.*

*Co-Chair VPP Steve Burian: Using working groups, the Valley Prosperity Partnership has identified six priorities: attract, develop & retain talent; ensure water security; expand research capacity, accelerate entrepreneur like activity, invest in critical infrastructure & define & improve the external perception of the Valley.*

*Park River Mayor Dan Stenvold: I think 21 other communities are in our Red River Regional Council area & we all work together as one community.*

**Side Stage: Partnership (Discussion Led by City Council President, Dana Sande, with representatives of the Grand Forks Public School System, Grand Forks Park District, Grand Forks County and City of East Grand Forks.)**

## **VIDEO 2 What I love about Grand Forks**

---

Relationships mean everything.

That is personified by F. John Marshall.

The thing is, when ANYONE around the nation, from the Halls of Congress to the brass at the Pentagon, think of Grand Forks Air Force Base, they think of John Marshall.

It is my honor to ask John to join me on stage at this time, escorted by Colonel Rodney Lewis, Grand Forks Air Force Base Wing Commander, as I present to him the first ever Grand Forks Lifetime Recognition Award.

[Presentation]

Thanks, John, for all you do and for helping make today a very special day for us all.

And thank you, Colonel Lewis, for assisting with the Lifetime Recognition Award.

What a portrait of leadership and what a great partner for our community we have in Colonel Lewis.

The base, with its over 3,000 active duty and family members, brings a total economic impact of \$252 Million to the community.

But more important than the dollars and infrastructure are the people. I'm here because of the base and I'm proud to have been a Launch Control Officer before attending UND Medical School.

It is because of our connection that we are proud of the base and we show our support in many ways.

The Base Realignment Impact Committee, adeptly managed by Tom Ford, the County's Government Affairs Coordinator, continues to stand guard for opportunities and threats and to take direct actions to keep our base strong and relevant.

Through the Community Partnership effort, the city, the air base and other partners are finding ways to most effectively and efficiently provide vital services and strengthen the base in a way that has become a model for the Air Force and for other communities around the nation.

This year, Grand Forks was nominated for recognition by the American Defense Communities organization

and once again, the Chamber's Military Affairs Committee and Golden Eagles are applying for the Abilene Trophy, the award to the community with the best support.

And we are a proud partner of the statewide NDCares effort to support our military members, through and after service.

And last year, at long last, our community broke ground at the Veterans Memorial Park, thanks to the leadership of John Hanson, the Park District and the many other partners including our own city planner, Brad Gengler.

I also want to recognize Joanne Whicker and Kevin Fruhwirth who are with us today. They led the repair of the Veteran's area in Memorial Cemetery.

I'll be at the Memorial Day ceremony again this year and I hope you all will join us.

One area where we need to focus is ensuring our North Dakota National Guard and Grand Forks Air Force Base are working hand in hand. I've had conversations with Fargo Mayor Mahoney specifically on this subject. The Governor, Congressional Delegation and others have also set this as a priority.

Let's now talk about not only a Grand Forks partner but an implicit part of who we are.

We ARE the Proud Home of the University of North Dakota.

I hope you have all noticed we're wearing our pride on our sleeve with new bus wraps, banners, and on our web site.

This is an exciting time, ripe with opportunity and we are pleased to see our President taking on this challenge to craft a strategy of long-term success.

It has been a pleasure working with Governor – President – Ed Schafer.

He earned our gratitude and appreciation as Governor, particularly for his work after the 1997 Flood when he and First Lady, Nancy literally put boots on the ground to get the recovery started.

One thing is for certain, Ed – he insists on 'Ed' – the Grand Forks community appreciates you and is behind you.

The city and UND have successes to build on like the jointly funded Internship Program and experiential learning opportunities.

We're leveraging on the research institution capacity –something we must continue to build on – with EERC, the Engineering School, and of course, with UND Aerospace.

UND representatives also populate numerous boards and commissions like the DDA, EDC and the Chamber that serve to build even stronger connections.

Just last night the UND Arts Collection at the Empire Theater kicked off an inspiring new exhibit – The Emergence of an Artful Relationship. How timely and a wonderful display of the impact of a UND downtown presence that we can build upon.

Events like this and the signature UND Writer's Conference do not just add to our Grand Forks culture, they ARE our culture. I'm very proud of them and encourage everyone to attend both.

I also want to express my ongoing appreciation to Vice President Reesor, Ken Vein and the Community and Campus Committee to address high risk alcohol use.

The committee has successfully championed health and safety and its new "Party Smart" campaign will continue to do so while also promoting respectful and engaging messages that reinforce Grand Forks is a great college town for vibrant student experiences.

I'm also quite impressed with Student Body President, Matt Kopp and his leadership.

The City is partnering with the Student Body and UND administration to establish greater vibrancy, particularly focused on student experience.

In the next few months, you'll hear more about a project to leverage private sector investment to promote vibrancy in the campus, downtown, and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street areas, as well as build up strong transportation connectivity.

This is a great time to acknowledge the invaluable contribution Northland Community Technical College, NCTC, brings to our region.

President Bona, thank you for your leadership and for your excellent team. We are so fortunate to have a partner that provides so much in the way of building a diverse workforce and creating opportunities for individuals and the region as a whole.

Over the past year, you've heard a lot about Vibrancy. Let's hear some more.

#### **[VIBRANCY VIDEO]**

##### **On screen: *State of the City Speech 2015***

Mayor Brown: *Go forth & visit other communities. Talk with your peers across the country. Mark the experiences that move you & bring back ideas.*

Shawn Gaddie: *I participated in the trip to Fort Collins.*

Jim Galloway: *I had the chance to spend a week in Copenhagen in September.*

##### **Fort Collins, CO**

Julie Rygg: *What really stuck with me is how much the people were truly compassionate about their community. They loved being in Fort Collins. They loved their community. And, when you first started hearing people talk about it was a little bit like is this an act and people just truly love it there.*

Shawn Gaddie: *We participated in a number of sessions with various Fort Collins representatives. The one thing I was thinking about or had in the back of my mind most of the time was what would this look like if representatives from Fort Collins came to Grand Forks.*

##### **Winnipeg, MB**

Jim Galloway: *They embraced winter. You know we are here in ND. We are not in Austin, Texas. We are in Grand Forks, ND. Let's embrace winter & not apologize for it. We live in a great place & let's celebrate that. And I thought that was pretty cool. Visiting with the people was a great one day trip for me. That was well worth it.*

##### **Copenhagen, Denmark**

Jonathan Holth: *And, we spent a week visiting with city leaders from all sort of different sectors. People from the private sector, the parks department, the mayor, city councilors & just talked about what they have going on in Copenhagen & it's really a dynamic place. They do an amazing job with their public spaces & an amazing job creating a vibrant city. They have really worked hard at building things on the human scale so that everything is attractive for people that are walking the streets & biking.*

##### **Vibrancy Committee – Arts & Events**

*Julie Rygg: We started out actually surveying a lot of these organizations & then felt we still weren't getting all of the information we felt was needed. Where do these groups need support? Where are they getting support? What would they like to see more of in Grand Forks? So that's how we came about the listening session.*

*Shawn Gaddie: So, it's very important to me personally to listen to the feedback that we are getting in these listening sessions to really understand if I'm meeting with individual artists or individual event planner or various organizations that serve the arts & events community in Grand Forks and what are their thoughts of some of the ideas & things that are being discussed as far as how do we become more vibrant and we are getting great feedback.*

**Vibrancy Committee – Downtown**

*Jonathan Holth: As we look at other successful downtowns around the country, the thing that really strikes me is that they have a strong relationship between the public sector & the private sector. So, what we wanted to do was get those sectors in the room together & talk about how we can work together & achieve the same goals.*

*Jim Galloway: Right now there is optimism & momentum going for downtown. Post flood people come back & see that things are changing & that there is momentum & value to a vibrant downtown.*

*Julie Rygg: I really think we need to do a better job about celebrating what we have going on here.*

---

Julie Rygg is right: Celebrating is EXACTLY what we need to do.

Our attention and our investments in vibrancy are paying off.

Thank you so much to our Vibrancy Committee members and particularly to the chairs Julie Rygg, Shawn Gaddie, Jonathan Holth, Jim Galloway, Debbie Storrs and Mike Jacobs.

I also want to recognize the key contributors in our Planning and Community Development office.

In addition to managing vital programs like CDBG and Home, they are implementing new micro-planned unit developments and supporting the Vibrancy Initiatives, the Downtown Development Association, the Public Arts Commission and various community events, as well as managing downtown parking.

We've also been fortunate that these efforts have been fueled by staunch partners including the Community Foundation, Knight Foundation and the Bush Foundation.

Through funding, technical expertise, and most importantly, through leadership, the Community Foundation and affiliated partners are keeping us on the front edge of creating the best community possible.

One of our last year's greatest successes was the continued development of Downtown.

Particularly through the leadership and vision of the Downtown Development Association, our community's *living room* is surging with a renewed energy and interest by community members and visitors from all over.

Congratulations to all the DDA members and board and especially Executive Director Stacey Mazjkrak.

Let's face it, we're all having fun downtown.

Grand Forks even officially named the "Kim Holmes Alley of Love" this year as part of Alley Alive. Kim is still basking in his Zupas on that one.

And this year will see the same events . . . plus more, including the first Downtown Street Fair.

All of these translate to even more private sector investment – like the new Rhombus Brewery, more shops, more hangouts, expanded downtown districts - and more economic activity.

I urge all our residents to join in the activity. After all, this is OUR Downtown.

Of course, we know our foundation with the arts is already strong – particularly regarding NOVAC and their hard work over the last year for strong artist advocacy and key programming. I am confident they can continue to play a key role.

Combined with that is the leadership of the PAC – I LOVE 'Ghost', by the way, the imagery of our farming past brought to life by Madelyn Camrud and Adam Kemp – as well as the new 88 Keys project with NOVAC. PAC has been instrumental in helping to develop the public arts plan, inventory our community art and set the stage for great things to come.

And what is really exciting is the energy of local artists, materialized in The Guild, a grass roots emergence of artists inspired by and led by Kathryn Fink.

Like a well-choreographed dance, these three separate but complementary bodies, along with the corps of art supporters and existing artists – you know who you are – have created an exciting dynamic of opportunity.

They'll work well with the top notch facilities in the like of UND's performance areas and community stalwarts like the Empire Arts Center and Fire Hall Theater that provide so much more than space, but vital programming and services that we must continue to support.

What an incredible arts scene, indeed.

Events are also increasing throughout the community.



We processed over 350 special events permits last year and the community is adding them all the time.

Including events like Forkin' Fest.

What a fantastic demonstration of what we can do as a community when we support leadership and inspiration like that of Nick Jensen, who not only brought us the Forkin' Fest but was the thrust behind celebrating Ambassador Glassheim and the naming of Glassheim Way, also known as 3<sup>rd</sup> St.

And of course, we do have indoor facilities that give us the best convention and concert center and the best college hockey arena anywhere!

The Alerus – the proud home of Bubba Ball – otherwise known as UND football – also hosted hundreds of events with over 200,000 visitors last year and we're looking forward to welcoming the State Girls Class B Basketball next week.

Over and above all this opportunity, vibrancy and economic impact, the Alerus also continues to operate in the black.

Win-Win! Nice job Cheryl Swanson and the Alerus crew.

Across town, in the proud home of the best college hockey in the nation, the Ralph is hosting the State High School Hockey tournament starting tomorrow.

And the World returns to Grand Forks in less than a month. The World Under 18 hockey tournament is going to be nearly two weeks of fantastic hockey with international guests and yet another chance to show how Grand Forks is the best host for major events.

All of this work on vibrancy is great fun and may sound fluffy to some but there is a hard challenge it is helping us address: Workforce.

Anyone signing a paycheck, bidding on a project, or in charge of hiring will confirm workforce is one of our top challenges.

In fact, as noted in the video, it is at the top of the list of the Valley Prosperity Partnership.

It is also a priority of the business community. The Chamber and the EDC co-chair a working group on workforce and are taking action.

For example, the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Northern Valley Career Expo brought almost 1500 10<sup>th</sup> graders for a Career Exploration Day and a very successful job-shadowing program.

In addition, NCTC is spearheading an innovative program to promote manufacturing training for New Americans that will help local employers fill open positions.

In order to properly address workforce we must take a three-dimensional approach: A Vibrant Community; Available Housing; and, A Welcoming Community.

We already talked about vibrancy so let's talk about housing.

The good news is people really want to live in Grand Forks.

The bad news is that demand continues to drive up housing costs.

Affordable housing, available housing for mid-professionals, and available housing for our new workforce could become barriers to attracting new industries or even new Air Force Base missions.

I've been consistent in saying I am not in favor of government actually building or developing. However, I am also not in favor of sitting idly by when there are real current and future needs.

As a start to this discussion I would like Council President Sande and Mr. Bergeron to reconvene a discussion on housing and prepare a snapshot of where we are today in terms of housing affordability and availability. This should include Terry Hanson of the Grand Forks Housing Authority and the report author, Mark Schill of Praxis.

When we talk workforce, we also need to talk about how open and welcoming our community is.

Our city's composition is becoming increasingly diverse.

That is a good thing and I was frustrated last year when we saw some hurtful actions.

These included the arson and the graffiti at the Juba Café. The owners are here today and I appreciate this opportunity to let them know I admire the grace they have demonstrated.

We are proud they are committed to remain and rebuild in Grand Forks.

I love Grand Forks. Our historical character is one of generosity, compassion and respect.

And we consider empathy as a strength.

For example, the work of the many compassionate volunteers and organizations like the Global Friends Coalition, Lutheran Social Services, area businesses and several area churches demonstrates our collective character.

And I'm proud the City has a history of tangible actions. We are a member of the national Welcoming Communities program, have adopted the LGBT anti-discrimination in housing ordinance and conduct the Immigrant Integration Initiative committee, started years ago by Hal Gershman.

More importantly, a number of grassroots groups have becoming increasingly active in order to encourage openness and sharing between all religions, races, abilities, and backgrounds. They are our neighbors, our colleagues, and our friends.

They are not "outsiders" or "dividers." They are part of our community.

I look forward to continuing to engage with these groups and encourage my fellow citizens to attend activities like the Global Friends Coalition's Soup in the Studio event at Muddy Waters Clay Center on March 10th, UND's Interfaith Week April 11-15th, and North Dakotans for Diversity & Compassion's "We Love Grand Forks" community party in conjunction with the YP's and Alley Alive in Town Square on May 6th.

More information on these and other events will be listed on the city's website as they become available.

I believe events and organizations like these contribute to our city's mission to keep Grand Forks friendly, and I look forward to seeing my friends and neighbors continuing to support such efforts.

---

Let me conclude with a recap of challenges and a list of proposed actions.

Our main challenges at this time are to address Workforce through an integrated and team approach with a specific look at housing availability and to assess our roads, plan for critical future infrastructure and ensure we have local controlled funding to make sure it is all done the most effective and efficient way possible.

Now here is a list of focus areas – marks on the wall, as one council member used to say – where we should highlight the very best version of Grand Forks.

This is what sets us apart or will set us apart and help us enhance and celebrate our authentic qualities.

Remember, we are working together . . . to be our best.

So we should start off with an easy one.

The Best College Hockey Town: We are. We know it. Let's celebrate it, make use of it and cement it in the international psyche. A starting action step is to gather a team to establish a US College Hockey Hall of Fame, with a physical building in the proximity of the best college hockey facility in the world.

The Best Place to Host or Attend a Major Event: Let's reinforce our Destination City status and build on all the great success. Our action is to attend and support events, including the upcoming U18 World Hockey, showcase and continue to invest in the very best facilities from the Alerus to the Ralph to the new ICON arena, demonstrate the very best community support like lining the streets for the Wild Hog Marathon. If we celebrate what we do and build on it, we will make sure everyone knows Grand Forks IS the best place to Host or Attend a Major Event.

The Best College Town: We're the proud home of UND and a great college town. I would like to formalize this effort in order to be the recognized Best College Town by asking President Schafer to help with a specific first action step of formalizing a Town/Gown structure to help us celebrate and communicate our successes and act on opportunities.

The Best Place to be an Entrepreneur: Coupling our internationally known innovation infrastructure with the robust new hotbed of entrepreneurial activity, Grand Forks can achieve recognition as the best place to be an entrepreneur. In conjunction with the VPP, EDC, Young Professionals, Center for Innovation and current entrepreneurs, we will convene an Entrepreneur Advisory Board made up of young professionals, and allocate resources from current Growth Fund balance for 2016 start-up support including for a new co-working space. More than seed funding, this is strong marketing that Grand Forks actively encourages its entrepreneur ecosystem and invests in leadership. Like a marathon, we want our startups not to see hurdles in their way, but instead see people lined up along the path, shouting encouragement and handing out cups of water.

The Best Downtown in the Region: We have a great downtown and it is getting even better. Let's chart a course to be the Best Downtown in the Region. To start, we will ask the DDA and the Downtown Vibrancy committee to assist city staff with issuing a Request For Proposals to develop specific properties. In addition, I want to see a proposal for a focused downtown development mechanism by 2017. It could be an arm of the EDC or City that focusses on encouraging investments and fostering tangible new growth that benefits the entire city.

The Best Place to Take a Walk: We should aspire to and achieve recognition as the best place to take a walk. We'll make sure it means "all year" and we'll make sure it is inclusive of all pedestrian mobility, for all ages and ability. It is a focus on Health in all policies and making use of our work in the 2045 Land Use Plan, the mobility plan, downtown and campus plans and in our new developments. We make sure there are not only paths, but paths to engaging places with interesting things to do and see along the way. We build on health, encourage social collisions, showcase public art and increased overall connectivity and in the end, we've got best place to take a walk.

The Best Engaged City: We have an active and engaged city already. We have had wonderful turnout and success with recent listening sessions for the vibrancy efforts and we will build on that. So in the next few weeks we will initiate an engagement process that will promote listening and building even more trust. It will help us to develop ownership of our challenges and opportunities and in the end, allow us to achieve an even greater authentic pride in Grand Forks that will continue to pave the way to even more success.

We are doing great things.

Our "best version" of so many things are the best around.

But we also know constant improvement is necessary.

We have to build trust within our community. That's why we're engaging.

We need to build ownership of our challenges and our opportunities and of our community in general.

And from that trust and ownership, we encourage a well-earned pride.

Trust. Ownership. Pride. I call that getting to the TOP.

And, in the end, we must become even greater fans of Grand Forks and become, in fact, cheerleaders, boosters and vocal champions of our community.

Now, some are going to be reluctant with this challenge. It's not part of our culture to boast.

Some will say we don't act like that.

I think we MUST be spirited fans of Grand Forks.

And I KNOW we CAN be.

I've seen it. (VIDEO)

---

Let's pledge together to celebrate ALL that is great in Grand Forks. (VIDEO)

The best schools, parks and place to raise a family (VIDEO).

The best place to start a business and build community.(VIDEO)

The best place to grow and realize your dreams. (VIDEO).

Can we be spirited fans for Grand Forks?

Yes we can.

I love Grand Forks.

(To crowd, gesturing) Let's say it together:

I - LOVE - GRAND FORKS.

Again, together.

See. . . Working together .... To be our Best.

Thank you.

(Crowd – Spirited fans applause!)

---