

2019 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

I am constantly amazed at the diversity of the residents of this great city. Almost 250,000 residents are African-American, 103,000 are foreign born, 53,000 are Latinos, 41,000 are veterans and 38,000 identify as LGBTQ.

Our population continues to get younger – the median age is 32. But more than 65,000 children under the age of 5 and more than 86,000 senior citizens also call Columbus home.

We are all neighbors and we are all part of the fabric that is Columbus.

In the summers following my sophomore and junior year at Earlham College, I was blessed with the opportunity to serve consecutive internships at the Carter Presidential Center in Atlanta. I was also fortunate enough to meet one of my heroes, President Jimmy Carter.

As you know, President Carter is a smart and decent man – he graduated from the Naval Academy, served on nuclear submarines and established a successful post-presidential career rooted in service. We could all learn a thing or two from him.

I'll never forget the advice he gave me over lunch one hot June day. We were in the basement of the Maranatha Methodist Church. There were maybe 8 or 9 interns, including me, along with the President and the First Lady, just having a conversation about everything under the sun.

I told President Carter that I was interested in politics and public service. He said to me in his plain spoken South Georgia accent, "If you're ever in a situation where you have to make important decisions, decisions that are going to impact people's lives, make sure you surround yourself with the smartest people you can find."

I have always taken that advice to heart.

With those words in mind, I would like to thank my very bright cabinet and my outstanding staff, especially my chief of staff, Ken Paul.

I would also like to thank my wife, Shannon, and my daughter. The commitment to lead a city is one that affects our entire family every day. I am grateful to you for sharing this journey with me.

Columbus, you have elected smart people that serve as partners in the work of the city:

- Columbus City Council President Shannon Hardin
- Council President Pro Tem – for a little while longer – Michael Stinziano
- Councilmembers Elizabeth Brown, Mitch Brown, Emmanuel Remy and Priscilla Tyson

I would also like to welcome the newest City Councilmember Shayla Favor.

Thank you to City Attorney Zach Klein and City Auditor Megan Kilgore.

Thank you to the Clerk of Courts Lori Tyack for being here tonight.

I would like to thank the Franklin County Commissioners: President Marilyn Brown, Kevin Boyce and John O'Grady.

A very special thank you to our congresswoman Joyce Beatty for being here.

And could I ask all of the other elected officials here tonight to please stand to be recognized.

A few more thank yous for those who started us off this evening:

- Myles Stickle from the Gay Men's Chorus for singing the national anthem
- Police and fire color guard for presenting the colors
- Our Columbus Police Explorers for being our volunteers and ushers tonight
- To my friend Reita Smith for the welcome

And to Principal Charles Richardson and Assistant Principal Martha Hal here at East High School: Thank you for

welcoming us to your house tonight!

I stand before you having served three years as your Mayor, and what an incredible three years it has been!

Tonight I will share with you our accomplishments, where we are now as a city, then my bold plans for the future.

Columbus continues to have the fastest growing economy in the Midwest, and we are the driver of the economy in the State of Ohio. It seems that every week Columbus is recognized for something – whether it's by Time magazine, Forbes or the Human Rights Campaign.

We landed the Smart Cities Challenge Grant, putting us on the cutting edge of mobility.

Columbus was also named one of Bloomberg's winning cities in the American Cities Climate Challenge – that will help us meet -- or beat – our near-term carbon reduction goals and improve the quality of life for our residents.

We hosted the National Urban League for their annual conference, the nation's largest annual civil rights conference, last August.

This year we'll host the American Society of Association Executives – the Super Bowl of annual meetings. It is expected to have a \$500 million economic impact over the next decade.

And did any of you catch the NCAA Women's Final Four last March? It was not only phenomenal basketball -- it was a flawlessly planned and executed major event. Linda Logan, the Columbus Sports Commission and Experience Columbus deserve a big round of applause for their outstanding work!

In my previous state of the city addresses, I committed to making Columbus America's Opportunity City, to tackling our most pressing challenges and making tangible long-lasting changes to lift up Columbus neighborhoods and move our entire city forward.

We have, and we are and I am proud to say that the state of our city is strong!

Many of you have heard me say that my top three priorities are neighborhoods, neighborhoods, neighborhoods.

The city has made significant investments in time and resources in Linden.

Between 1960 and 2010, the population of Linden decreased from 26,000 to 18,000. The median household income is less today than it was two decades ago. And infant mortality rates were twice as high in Linden as anywhere else in Franklin County.

Linden is a proud community with a rich history, but we knew that revitalizing this great neighborhood would not be simple. And we knew that we could not restore this community to greatness without the help of ALL Linden residents.

In October, we rolled out "One Linden" – a community-driven master plan to address transportation, housing, retail and small business, health and safety, and education and workforce.

What is different about this plan from others is that it was created by the community for the community.

People like Peggy Williams were instrumental in this work. Miss Peg, as she is known in the neighborhood, is a lifelong resident of Linden. She is a homeowner, works at a local childcare center and is a graduate of the United Way Neighborhood Leadership Academy.

She knows the challenges of this neighborhood. She lives with them.

But she also lives with optimism for the future of her community. She was actively involved in the planning process and continues to contribute her time, energy and ideas as we move forward together to implement the One Linden plan.

Earlier this week we lost a giant in the Linden community with the passing of Clarence Lumpkin – who was affectionately known as the Mayor of Linden. I would like to take a moment to recognize his decades of service to his community and offer my prayers for his family and all who knew him.

Godspeed, Mr. Lumpkin.

Our commitment to Linden has not come at the expense of other neighborhoods. We continue to make investments across our great city.

On the Hilltop, we opened the Glenwood Recreation Center and invested in the newest Boys & Girls Club in the J. Ashburn Center. And – just like in Linden -- our Department of Neighborhoods and the Neighborhood Design Center are now in the process of creating a master plan for the Hilltop – with the residents.

In Driving Park, we reopened a state-of-the-art community recreation center complete with a pool, weight room and community rooms to promote the health and well-being of the neighborhood.

On the South Side, we helped build more than 200 affordable housing units both at the Career Gateway Center and Parsons Village for our seniors.

We also partnered with Community Development 4 All People to help open the All People's Fresh Market on Parsons, offering residents fresh produce – free of charge.

In Franklinton, the City contributed to the opening of Jubilee Market, a non-profit grocery store that is serving residents on the West Side. The Rich and River development and the Gravity project are near completion and new projects are on the horizon that will incorporate affordable housing options and help create mixed-income neighborhoods.

In Northland, Huntington Bank opened a new office complex that houses over 1,400 employees. They also recommitted to the neighborhood by investing \$300 million in loans to low-to-moderate income residents.

In Milo Grogan, affordable housing has been created by Homeport, Rogue Fitness has brought in hundreds of jobs, and COTA's CMAX line has had a real impact on moving people in and to the neighborhood.

In the Waggoner Grove neighborhood on the Far East side, we broke ground on a state-of-the-art fire station that will be completed this year.

And in Lazelle Woods -- one of our fastest growing communities to the north -- we began construction on a new police substation.

Throughout Columbus, we have demolished blighted and abandoned properties and we have spent record resources to pave streets, improve sidewalks and traffic signals and continue to provide residents with clean drinking water.

All of this contributes to the overall well-being of all of our residents.

Studies show that early childhood education is the foundation of lifelong learning and a predictor of future success. Since 2016, we have increased the opportunity for children we serve each year by 33%.

In September 2017, the Champion Avenue location of the Columbus Early Learning Centers welcomed a young girl named Amilah. On her first day of pre-K, she was shy and nervous. She had a tough time engaging with her new classmates and was only able to identify six letters of the alphabet.

By the summer of 2018, Amilah could identify all of the letters of the alphabet, the sounds associated with them, and clap out the syllables in words – and she had made a ton of friends!

Children like Amilah are why we prioritize high-quality early childhood education! I want to thank our providers for their dedication!

But Amilah's story is not an exception or a rare occurrence. That is why the city's funding for Early Start Columbus is

so important. It is also why I have charged Jane Leach, executive director of FutureReady, to develop a regional plan focusing on birth to five -- because the learning and socialization that happens at the earliest age has the most impact. I know that with public and private partnerships we will become a national leader and a model in the birth to 5 space.

Columbus worked hard to be named the nation's first "Smart City" and was awarded a \$40 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation, along with \$10 million from Paul G. Allen Philanthropies.

But that was just the start.

Since then, we have received commitments of almost \$600 million in aligned investments by more than two dozen public and private sector organizations like AEP, Honda and AT&T.

Last year, we released the Smart Columbus Operating System -- the backbone of all of the work we are doing. And we moved into the Smart Columbus Experience Center along the Scioto Mile to show residents and visitors what a smart and connected city can look like.

Our efforts to boost consumer adoption of electric vehicles is also paying off. Since 2017, electric vehicle registration has increased 65% -- outpacing the Midwest and the nation.

In 2017, we seated the Columbus Women's Commission headed by First Lady Shannon Ginther. She is a passionate advocate for women's rights and is leading the effort to assure city policies are first and foremost fair and equitable. And this work is not limited to the public sector.

Last year, the Women's Commission launched The Columbus Commitment, asking companies and organizations to pledge to learn about the gender pay gap, understand how race and other factors create even larger disparities and take action to build awareness of the unique challenges facing women in the workplace.

At the start, we set the goal to enlist 50 companies. But since then, almost 200 employers have signed the pledge to help alleviate gender- and race-based inequalities. Clearly, equality is the business of Columbus. I thank those who made the commitment -- and challenge those who have not to do so today!

The Columbus Women's Commission has also played a vital role in helping reduce the city's eviction rate -- that is the 7th highest in the country. Evictions disproportionately affect women -- particularly African-American women -- in our community.

Because of the Commission's work, the Self-Help Resource Center was relocated right outside eviction court, making it easier for those on the verge of homelessness to access services that can prevent eviction. In just the fourth quarter of 2018, they served more families than in 2016 and 2017 combined.

That is a small change with a big impact.

Earlier this year, City Council amended city codes to limit retaliatory evictions -- in which a landlord files an eviction notice against a tenant as retribution for complaints about the condition of their housing.

I want to thank Columbus City Council for their partnership in this initiative.

As a city, we must confront discrimination and inequality wherever we find it and work to create a culture of inclusiveness where promoting diversity is at the heart of every decision we make.

All of our work is built on the foundation of trust with the community. The first two executive orders I signed focus transparency and inclusion.

I believe that Diversity and Inclusion begins at the top. Women and people of color comprise more than half of my cabinet and staff. I am also proud to say that I have a liaison to the LGBTQ community both in my cabinet and on my staff.

The success of our Office of Diversity and Inclusion extends beyond my office and other city employees. In 2017, we saw a 50% increase in city spending with minority- and women-owned businesses – a sign that our strategies are working, working for companies like Keep it Clean Window Cleaning.

The owners of Keep It Clean were introduced and certified with the City of Columbus in early 2018. They worked with our Business Opportunity Assessment Program that assists with company's capacity-building needs.

They have since been awarded their first major contract with the city. Owners Daryl Lee and Michael Winkfield told us that through this, they have been able to build their business and keep people working.

Diversity and inclusion must be a part of all that we do as a City.

While we have much work left to do, we owe a debt of gratitude to Columbus Police Chief Kim Jacobs who broke the glass ceiling and made increasing diversity a priority for the Division. Chief Jacobs has also:

- set standards in implicit bias training for officers that received national recognition.
- established Diversity and Inclusion officer positions to better serve communities of color, new Americans, Muslims and the LGBTQ community.
- led the city in signing on to the One Mind campaign to improve police response to people affected by mental illness – and made Crisis Intervention Training mandatory for all recruits.

Chief Jacobs, thank you for your service.

In 2016, I said that we would adopt body-worn cameras as another tool for keeping police and the public safe. Our \$10 million investment has helped solve crimes and protect residents and our officers.

Columbus also led the way in developing the policies and guidelines for how body cameras are used, serving as the model for state legislation passed by the Ohio General Assembly and signed into law in December. I want to offer my thanks to Senator Hearcel Craig for championing this legislation.

In 2017 we faced a record homicide rate, and I knew we needed a different approach. We couldn't simply police our way out of the spike in homicides.

We held a series of small group meetings with residents across the city and developed the Comprehensive Neighborhood Safety Strategy -- a broad-based approach that engaged law enforcement, every city department, businesses, faith and community leaders and residents to help reduce crime.

We expanded the Safe Streets bike patrol from Linden to the Hilltop and the South Side. Not only did it help reduce crime – Linden alone saw a 19% drop in gun violence last summer – it helped build police and community relations.

I heard from residents and police officers alike who told me time and again how much they loved the program because it made officers more accessible and helped them strengthen ties with the community.

The Neighborhood Safety Strategy also includes coordinated efforts to create physical deterrents to crime such as clearing alleyways of trash and installing pedestrian lighting and sidewalks. Neighborhood liaisons, area commissioners and residents work together to solve nuisance code violations.

And we passed the most comprehensive local gun laws in Ohio to keep guns out of the wrong hands – while we push the state to finally pass common sense gun laws that protect our families and first responders.

Last year's crime statistics show we are moving in the right direction. As of December 31, 2018, the homicide rate dropped by 28% and violent crime continues to trend down.

The Columbus Community Safety Advisory Commission is another key component of the strategy that will have long-lasting effects on policing in our city. Seventeen residents have been charged with reviewing and recommending best practices to ensure the Columbus Division of Police has the best training, policies and procedures to protect and serve our entire community.

The Commission has been meeting regularly and working with Matrix, an independent consultant, to present

recommendations by this spring. Their work will also help to inform us as we launch a national search for the next chief of police.

I know the work has not been easy – the conversations have, at times, been spirited.

I want to thank the Commission and especially the chair, Janet Jackson, for their commitment, and I look forward to your recommendations.

As I said, we are conducting a national search for the next chief of police because the people of Columbus and our police officers deserve the very best – whether that person comes from inside or outside the Division.

My deputy chief of staff Dawn Tyler Lee will head up that process that will include robust community engagement.

Earlier this month, we enacted historic campaign finance reforms. They create new, cutting edge dark money disclosure to make sure municipal elections are decided by the people – not by special interest dollars.

In addition, this legislation establishes the first campaign finance limits in the city's history and expands access to our elections with new tax credits for small donations. I am grateful to Columbus City Council for taking up this charge.

The city's ability to provide core city services – like snow removal and police and fire service -- is dependent on income tax which represents almost 80% of our revenue.

I am pleased to report that since 2016, we have created 7,000 new jobs across many industries in the City of Columbus. Our positive business culture has resulted in two privately held start-up companies obtaining \$1 billion valuations -- Root Insurance and Cover My Meds.

To streamline the building process, we continue to move more permitting online. In 2018, 70% of permits were issued online – improving timelines and increasing efficiencies for the city and our customers.

The construction trade is booming in Columbus, and we are leveraging that boom to get more people into the building construction trade as lifetime careers with good benefits.

In 2017 in partnership with Columbus City Schools, we established the Columbus Building Construction Trades Community Benefits Fund to offer scholarships for Columbus residents enrolled in apprenticeship programs. To date, we have enrolled almost 500 people in apprenticeship programs – and more than a third our women, minorities and people from low-income neighborhoods.

Columbus continues to receive billions of dollars of investments in our traditional strength sectors like finance and insurance. And our hospitals and medical centers are now creating the next generation of industry such as gene therapy. Nationwide Children's Hospital and Ohio State are helping to create companies that save lives.

Pillar Technologies is another Columbus success story – drawing top technology talent and helping with one of the city's biggest initiatives, Smart Columbus.

Here's another Pillar Connection: the man who brought Pillar to our city – Bob Myers – is a Columbus native and a Northland High School graduate!

I am excited about the work that Pillar is doing with Smart Columbus and where we are headed.

Columbus is experiencing tremendous growth. We lead the Midwest in job creation, and unemployment remains historically low. The jobs created in Columbus fuel the city's investments in Columbus neighborhoods.

Since the great recession, sound fiscal management and an ongoing commitment to achieving greater efficiencies has allowed the City to reinvest savings into critical city services.

In 2009, the City committed to achieving savings of 100 million dollars -- and we more than doubled that goal in just 5 years. And, last year the City launched a citywide operations review to identify additional efficiencies and make recommendations on how to best position the city for future growth while maintaining high-quality services.

None of the reforms made in recent years -- nor the ones we will make in the months and years ahead -- would be possible without the strong partnerships we've built with organized labor. Through the collective bargaining process, our labor unions have helped secure the future of Columbus, while assuring fair wages, benefits and working conditions for their membership.

Thank you to our labor unions.

Last year, the population in our region grew by 40,000 people – and more than half of that was within the city limits of Columbus.

So the city is strong, and our future looks bright.

But while 2/3 of our residents are doing very well, another 1/3 of our neighbors struggle to make ends meet.

And as our city grows, we are not immune from some of the challenges facing our peer cities.

As is true across our nation, opioid addiction continues to ravage our neighborhoods.

In 2017, we announced the Franklin County Opiate Task Force that partnered the city, county and other entities to fight this disease that threatens family and neighborhood stability every day.

We launched RREACT -- the Rapid Response Emergency Addiction and Crisis Team – that coordinates a medic and a social worker to follow up with people who have overdosed on opioids. In 2018, the first full year of the program, we recorded nearly 3,000 EMS calls in which naloxone – a medication that rapidly reverses opioid overdose – was administered. Of those patients, more than 1,000 were admitted for addiction treatment. That means more than 1,000 people – brothers and sisters, moms and dads, sons and daughters – had another chance to fight the relapsing brain disease that is addiction.

Columbus also helped pave the way for the opening of the Maryhaven Addiction Stabilization Center on the South Side to relieve pressure on hospital emergency rooms and provide more chances for recovery.

Earlier this year, Columbus Public Health was charged with leading our collective efforts to reduce opioid addiction – because the opioid addiction epidemic is clearly a public health crisis.

There is still much work to do, and I look to Columbus Public Health and all of our community partners to make progress in this area.

Infant mortality – especially in the African-American community – remains a complex problem without simple solutions.

- When I was City Council President, I was asked to speak at an event at the Lincoln Theater held by the Ohio Equity Institute.
- I asked to go first because it was my daughter's third birthday.
- Shocked by the stats: 150 babies in Franklin County dying each year before their first birthdays, African-American babies two times more likely than white babies to die
- While I was celebrating my daughter's third birthday, 150 moms and dads were never going to be able to celebrate even their child's first birthday.
- I committed myself to reducing infant mortality in Columbus.

I am grateful to Erika Clark Jones, Donna James, our past board chair, Michael Fiorile, our current board chair and all of our health partners, sleep ambassadors and home visitors for continuing the work of saving babies in Columbus.

Every baby in every neighborhood deserves the chance to celebrate his or her first birthday and beyond.

So, what's next, Columbus? When you envision our city in the next 10 years, 20 years, 50 years? What do you see?

I see an affordable city with dynamic, inclusive growth, mixed income neighborhoods that support family stability and mobility that provides equity and improves the quality of life for all of our residents.

And we will do it together, like we're doing with CelebrateOne, like we're doing with Smart Columbus, like we did to Save the Crew – not just to keep soccer in Columbus, but to leverage private partnerships for affordable housing, jobs and historic minority participation in the building of a new stadium and the new community sports park.

We will use the same collaborative, collective spirit to move us all forward.

As I said earlier, rolling out One Linden was one of our great accomplishments last year. Now, we are in the process of implementing it.

One of the pillars of the plan involves stabilizing and expanding housing options.

I am pleased to announce that the Department of Neighborhoods and my office are meeting regularly with developers to reimagine what housing can look like in Linden. These developers—Crawford-Hoying, Connect Realty, Kaufman Development, The Pizzuti Companies and Wagenbrenner Development—share my enthusiasm for innovative ideas and are working with the City to create new single-family homes and townhouses, as well as small and large commercial opportunities in the neighborhood.

I am excited by this collaboration and look forward to sharing new developments as our work progresses.

Our affordable housing efforts reach beyond Linden. We have made historic changes to a decades-long residential tax incentive policy. We have modernized how we award abatements and incentives to ensure growth in all of our opportunity neighborhoods.

The new policies went into place this month, and we are already seeing interest from developers who are as committed to creating mixed income neighborhoods as I am.

In addition, through the work of City Council, we have made it mandatory for businesses who receive incentives to offer a minimum of 15 dollars an hour for its workers. People who work in Columbus should be paid a living wage.

Earlier this month, I announced a bond package for the May ballot that will bring \$50 million for affordable housing. This money will be an investment allocated over several years and used in partnership with many other private and public agencies including the county and our suburban neighbors – because affordable housing is not a problem that ends at our city limits.

We are also moving from a land bank to a land trust system by working closely with the Central Ohio Community Improvement Corporation and Franklin County.

A land trust will allow our neighborhoods to preserve affordability on a property permanently – allowing seniors and other residents to stay in their homes.

This evening I am excited to announce that the city is committing \$3.8 million– in addition to bond money -- for a pilot project that the land trust will be undertaking in four areas of Columbus: Franklinton, South Side, the Near East and Weinland Park.

Our funding will leverage more than \$7.2 million in private investment for the construction of at least 30 homes which will be built and sold this year. I want to recognize Council President Hardin for championing this initiative.

Affordability is just one pillar for the future of our city. Equitable access to mobility is crucial, too. It gives residents access to jobs, healthcare, childcare, education and even fresh fruits and vegetables.

Our Smart Columbus Team will unveil the Prenatal Trip Assistance project this summer in all eight opportunity neighborhoods. This app will help expectant mothers schedule rides, as well as communicate with their doctors. In addition, the app will help them arrange rides to and from grocery stores and pharmacies, so they can make sure they're getting the food and prescriptions they need for a healthy pregnancy.

I'd like to recognize and thank Molina Heath Care and CareSource for being partners of Smart Columbus and bringing this project to life.

Today, attempting a trip using three modes of transportation requires three different applications to plan each leg of the trip and you would have to pay for each separately.

That is why Smart Columbus will release a multimodal trip planning application this year – and by 2020, we will enhance this app to include a common payment system.

The Common Payment System will ensure equitable access to all through a planned smart card option that can be loaded with cash for those users who are unbanked or just choose not to link their credit or debit cards to the system.

Columbus is known for being smart and open -- and that includes our approach to new mobility services such as dockless bikes and scooters. We will continue to welcome new, innovative mobility service providers in this great city as long as they agree to operate under our value structure rooted in equity, access and opportunity.

Technology use and internet access have become an everyday necessity. Whether it is for work, banking, healthcare, schoolwork or just connecting with your community, we all need access to technology.

All of our residents, regardless of income or neighborhood, deserve fast and reliable internet access.

Digital inclusion is a priority for the City of Columbus because it is also about equity, access and opportunity. Not only should every resident have access to the internet, they should understand technology and the relevancy to their daily lives.

This year we will work with our public and private partners to make an unprecedented, historic commitment to expand high speed internet to all of our neighborhoods. We will develop a framework to enhance digital literacy training and work to remove barriers so every resident has an opportunity to be fully engaged in our digital community.

Climate change impacts all of our lives, but our most vulnerable residents are already disproportionately affected. Our opportunity neighborhoods are hotter – especially during extreme heat events like we've seen the last several years.

Sustainable Columbus is working with external partners and internally with key city departments to guide us in finding solutions. We're focusing on protecting natural resources . . . combating climate change, reducing waste and engaging our residents – to protect those most impacted.

We are laying the foundation to transform the way we power municipal operations through renewable energy. Our Division of Power has committed to purchase at least 50% renewable energy to power city facilities by 2020.

To have an impact at a large scale, the entire community must rally together and change the way energy is generated, consumed and conserved. We have the perfect opportunity for this work with Bloomberg Philanthropies as part of the Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge.

Let me be clear: Climate change is a social justice issue, and we are working to fix it in our city.

In 2017, the City of Columbus in partnership with the construction building trades and the NAACP entered into a Community Benefits Agreement for construction of Fire Station #35. The agreement -- the first of its kind in the history of Columbus -- guarantees local workforce for a percentage of the project AND record minority participation.

The Community Benefits Agreement has been so successful that we will be using the same type of agreement for the building of the Linden Community Recreation Center and the Columbus Community Sports Park on the existing site of MAPFRE stadium – because Columbus workers deserve to be part of the building of their city!

Nationally, firms with fewer than 100 employees have the largest share of small business employment – and the same is true of Columbus. In fact, Columbus has almost 8,000 very small businesses – more than 80% of all of our companies have 20 or fewer employees.

Start ups and small businesses aid family stabilization and encourage the growth of mixed income neighborhoods. But we also know that start ups often face challenges such as accessing funds and technical or logistical problems.

Through the work of consultant Next Street, we are conducting a small business ecosystem assessment. Just last week, we named an advisory committee made up of area small business and entrepreneurial leaders and other stakeholder groups.

This summer, we will begin implementation of a multi-year action plan with the guiding principal that entrepreneurship does more than create jobs – it betters neighborhoods by reducing blight and even crime.

At my State of the City address in 2017, I announced the creation the Hilltop Early Childhood Partnership to double the number of Hilltop children enrolled in quality early learning programs by 2020. One of the recommendations was the development of a new early learning facility on the Hilltop to increase the capacity of quality programs.

I am happy to announce that through a collaboration with Doug Borrer, Michael Redd, Columbus City Schools, and the Boys and Girls Club, a new facility will be built in the middle of the Hilltop – directly adjacent to Highland Elementary School and the J. Ashburn Boys and Girls Club.

This new facility will provide a high-quality early learning education to more than 200 Hilltop children and crucial programs and services for their families.

This unique partnership will create an educational “campus” – allowing all three organizations to share space and resources, and collaborate on important programs and services.

What we do now in all of these areas paves the way for the future of this city for decades to come.

And so, Columbus, I ask you to join me and to commit to helping advance change and help shape the future of Columbus.

I ask you to define the role you will play to help promote dynamic and inclusive growth, to help strengthen our middle class and to build mixed income neighborhoods where all Columbus residents have the opportunity to share in our prosperity.

In a political climate where much is expected of government, where challenges abound but our faith in elected leaders is fleeting, I ask you to stand with me to help chart our future. Government alone cannot solve the problems we face. Our programs and investments in sound ideas alone are not enough to build strong neighborhoods. We need you.

This is our chance, Columbus, our chance to grow and to lead. This is our moment.

It is our time, right now, together.

Thank you!