

MAYOR TOM HENRY'S 2016 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

THANK YOU, CHUCK, FOR THAT WARM INTRODUCTION.

I APPRECIATE YOUR COMMITMENT AND SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY.

FRIENDS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, HONORED GUESTS, RESIDENTS OF FORT WAYNE, WELCOME.

I'M HONORED TO BE WITH YOU TODAY TO TALK ABOUT HOW WE CAN CONTINUE TO MOVE FORT WAYNE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR TRUSTING IN ME TO SERVE AS YOUR MAYOR FOR ANOTHER FOUR YEARS.

I'M HUMBLLED AND HONORED BY THE CONFIDENCE YOU'VE PLACED IN ME.

BY WORKING TOGETHER, THE FUTURE HOLDS ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES FOR OUR GREAT CITY.

YOU KNOW, FORT WAYNE IS A CITY ON THE MOVE.

AND, AS A RESULT, WE'RE THE ENVY OF MANY CITIES IN OUR STATE AND NATION.

WE'RE COMMITTED TO MEETING THE NEEDS, WANTS, AND DESIRES OF RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES.

OUR APPROACH TO MAKING FORT WAYNE A BETTER PLACE EACH DAY HAS MOVED US AWAY FROM THE STATUS QUO AND INSTEAD TOWARD BOLDNESS AND GREATNESS.

THE PRIDE AND EXCITEMENT WE'RE EXPERIENCING IN OUR COMMUNITY IS CONTAGIOUS.

IT BROUGHT ALL OF US HERE TODAY TO THE GRAND WAYNE CENTER - A REAL JEWEL IN DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE.

THIS FACILITY HOSTED 53 CONVENTIONS LAST YEAR, UPGRADED WI-FI CAPABILITIES, AND IMPLEMENTED AN ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM THAT REDUCED UTILITY COSTS BY 80-THOUSAND DOLLARS.

I CAN'T THINK OF A BETTER VENUE TO SHARE MY VISION FOR THE CITY THAT WE ALL LOVE AND BELIEVE IN.

NOW, WE ALL WANT FORT WAYNE TO THRIVE AND GROW.

BUT TO DO THAT, OUR DOWNTOWN – THE HEART OF OUR CITY – MUST BE STRONG.

IT HAS TO BE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY.

WELL, NOW THANKS TO YOU, WE'RE A RECOGNIZED LEADER IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMENITIES.

WE SHOULD BE PROUD OF WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED AND WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR ALL OF US.

FOR INSTANCE, ASH SKYLINE PLAZA, THE NATIONAL CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS FOR ASH BROKERAGE, WILL BE FINISHED IN MAY.

TIM ASH'S VISION AND LEADERSHIP ON THIS DEVELOPMENT IS TO BE COMMENDED.

OUR CITY'S SKYLINE GARAGE IS NOW COMPLETE AND OPEN TO MONTHLY CLIENTS AND SOON IT WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC PARKING.

AND THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED SKYLINE TOWER COMPONENT WILL COMPLETE THIS UNIQUE 100 MILLION DOLLAR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT.

CONSTRUCTION WILL BEGIN THIS YEAR ON ITS 12 STORIES OF APARTMENT UNITS, RETAIL, AND OFFICE SPACE TOTALING 170,000 SQUARE FEET.

BRAD TOOTHAKER WITH GREAT LAKES CAPITAL, OUR RESIDENTIAL PARTNER, IS WITH US TODAY.

BRAD, WOULD YOU PLEASE STAND TO BE RECOGNIZED.

IT TOOK A LOT OF TIME AND EFFORT TO GET THIS RESIDENTIAL PIECE FINALIZED, BUT IT'S SOMETHING WE'RE CERTAINLY GOING TO BE PROUD OF.

AND, JUST A FEW BLOCKS AWAY, CITYSCAPE FLATS, THE 27 MILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT ACROSS FROM PARKVIEW FIELD, WILL BE COMPLETED NEXT SUMMER AND OFFER YET ANOTHER OPTION FOR THOSE SEEKING TO MAKE DOWNTOWN THEIR HOME.

THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF BUZZ ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OF A DOWNTOWN ARENA.

WELL, SWEETWATER SOUND CEO, CHUCK SURACK, HAS STEPPED UP AND PUT TOGETHER A COMMITTEE OF RESPECTED LEADERS TO EVALUATE THE FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF A SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT VENUE.

AND I TRULY APPRECIATE THEIR PATIENCE, DILIGENCE, AND COMMITMENT TO THE PROCESS.

NOW, I PERSONALLY BELIEVE AN ARENA WOULD BE A GREAT WIN FOR FORT WAYNE AND THE REGION.

BUT, I'M ALSO A REALIST, AND IF THE COMMITTEE COMES BACK AND SAYS THE FINANCIALS AND LOGISTICS DON'T WORK NOW; I'M WILLING TO HOLD OFF FOR A BETTER TIME.

I ANTICIPATE A RECOMMENDATION WILL BE COMING FROM THE COMMITTEE VERY SOON.

AS OUR DOWNTOWN GROWS AND PROSPERS, REDEVELOPMENT OF THE LANDING IS SOMETHING I'M EXTREMELY EXCITED ABOUT.

MY HOPE IS THAT IT WILL PROVIDE A GATHERING PLACE FOR HOUSING, BUSINESSES, AND ENTERTAINMENT.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT TRUST AND THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER FORT WAYNE, WE'VE SELECTED THE MODEL GROUP AS THE DEVELOPER TO LEAD THE EFFORTS TO MAKE THE LANDING A SIGNATURE ACCOMPLISHMENT.

A DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT WILL BE IN PLACE IN THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS, AND WE'RE HOPEFUL CONSTRUCTION CAN GET STARTED LATE THIS YEAR.

AND, NOT FAR FROM THERE, RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT IS TAKING CENTER STAGE.

I'M ENCOURAGED BY THE CONTINUED INTEREST AND SUPPORT OUR RIVERFRONT AREA IS RECEIVING.

YOU'RE PROBABLY ASKING YOURSELF, WHAT WILL WE SEE THIS YEAR ALONG THE RIVERFRONT?

WELL, FIRST, WE MUST COMPLETE THE NECESSARY LAND ACQUISITIONS.

THEN, WE WILL BEGIN DEMOLISHING STRUCTURES.

AFTER THAT, WE'LL HAVE THE FINAL DESIGNS OF THE PROMENADE COMPLETED AND THEN PUT OUT FOR BID FOR THE CONSTRUCTION TO START IN 2017.

WE HAVE A GREAT TEAM IN PLACE TO MOVE RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT FORWARD.

RIVERWORKS DESIGN GROUP, COMPRISED OF THE TOP LOCAL AND NATIONAL TALENT, IS TASKED WITH ENGINEERING AND DESIGNING THE PROMENADE.

THE RIVERWORKS TEAM IS WITH US TODAY.

WOULD ALL OF YOU PLEASE STAND.

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THIS EXCITING INITIATIVE.

I ALSO WANT TO THANK THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER FORT WAYNE, THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BOARD, AND NUMEROUS PRIVATE DONORS WHO ARE HELPING TO MAKE RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT A REALITY.

AS YOU CAN SEE, FORT WAYNE IS TRULY BECOMING A POINT OF DESTINATION.

NEARLY SIX MILLION PEOPLE VISITED HERE LAST YEAR.

OUR GUESTS HAVE SPENT MORE THAN 500 MILLION DOLLARS, AND OVER NINE-THOUSAND LOCAL JOBS ARE DIRECTLY SUPPORTED BY VISITOR SPENDING.

OUR FRIENDS AT VISIT FORT WAYNE HAVE BEEN TRUE LEADERS IN WORKING TO ATTRACT AND ENCOURAGE ACTIVITIES THAT BRING INTEREST TO OUR COMMUNITY.

BUT, WHAT ARE WE DOING TO ENSURE THAT WE CONTINUE TO SUCCEED?

WELL, WE'VE CREATED A CLIMATE THAT'S POSITIONED US FOR JOB GROWTH AND BUSINESS RETENTION.

IT'S ONE OF THE REASONS WHY WE WERE SELECTED FOR REGIONAL CITIES FUNDING.

THANK YOU TO GREATER FORT WAYNE INC. AND THE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR LEADING THIS COLLABORATION.

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING HOW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIVE PROJECTS WILL STRENGTHEN US AS A REGION.

INCIDENTALLY, IN 2015, FORT WAYNE RETAINED MORE THAN SIX THOUSAND JOBS.

AND WE SAW NEARLY 16 HUNDRED NEW JOBS COME TO OUR COMMUNITY, WITH A TOTAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT OF NEARLY 1.3 BILLION DOLLARS.

OUR DIVERSIFIED EMPLOYMENT BASE IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE, SO MUCH SO THAT WE SAW GAINS IN SEVERAL BUSINESSES.

MORPHO TRUST

SWEETWATER SOUND

ELLISON BAKERY

MEDICAL PROTECTIVE

GENERAL MOTORS

AND, PRESS SEAL GASKET

IT'S NO WONDER WE'VE BEEN RANKED AS ONE OF THE TOP 10 PLACES TO DO BUSINESS.

AS LARGER COMPANIES EXPAND AND SUCCEED, SO TOO ARE OUR SMALL BUSINESSES.

IN FACT, COLLECTIVELY, SMALL BUSINESSES ARE THE CITY'S LARGEST EMPLOYER.

AND, I'M PARTICULARLY GRATEFUL FOR PEOPLE LIKE DONNY YEOMAN AND THE YEOMAN SERVICE CENTER THAT'S BEEN ON PETTIT AVENUE FOR 54 YEARS.

HE'S A THIRD GENERATION OWNER WHO'S DEDICATED TO HIS NEIGHBORHOOD AND HIS LOYAL CUSTOMERS.

IT'S A COMPANY OF SEVEN EMPLOYEES THAT PLANS TO GROW TO 11.

WITH HELP FROM THE CITY, THEY'VE INVESTED OVER 450-THOUSAND DOLLARS TO UPGRADE THEIR FACILITY.

DONNY IS WITH US TODAY. WOULD YOU PLEASE STAND TO BE RECOGNIZED.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING FORT WAYNE A BETTER PLACE AND FOR SERVING

YOUR CUSTOMERS WELL.

BY BEING A CITY WHERE BUSINESSES WANT TO BE, WE'RE ALSO MAKING TREMENDOUS STRIDES IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS.

PEOPLE WANT TO BE WHERE INVESTMENTS AND IMPROVEMENTS ARE TAKING PLACE.

IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, WE'VE INVESTED MORE THAN 40 MILLION DOLLARS IN NEIGHBORHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS.

AND WE'RE GOING TO INVEST ANOTHER 23 MILLION DOLLARS THIS YEAR. THAT'S A TOTAL OF MORE THAN 60 MILLION DOLLARS IN JUST THREE YEARS.

IN 2016, WE'LL BE ADDRESSING MOTORIST SAFETY BY STRAIGHTENING THE CURVE ON MAUMEE AVENUE NEAR INDIANA TECH.

MCKINNIE FROM HESSEN CASSEL TO SOUTH ANTHONY WILL BE ENHANCED WITH A CENTER TURN LANE, SIDEWALKS, AND A NEW TRAIL.

IMPROVEMENTS TO STREETS, SIDEWALKS, CURBS, AND A-D-A RAMPS WILL OCCUR IN ARLINGTON PARK, CASSELWOOD, EAGLE CREEK, AND PINE VALLEY TO NAME A FEW.

PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND DEMOLITION WORK WILL PREPARE THE WEST STATE BOULEVARD AREA FOR THE MUCH-NEEDED IMPROVEMENT PROJECT TO BE BID THIS YEAR FOR CONSTRUCTION TO START IN 2017.

AN ARCHITECTURAL AND DESIGN PROPOSAL WILL BE ASKED FOR TO DEVELOP A TRAFFIC CIRCLE AT SHERMAN BOULEVARD AND GOSHEN AVENUE.

AND, YOU'LL SEE ANOTHER FIVE MILES OF TRAILS BUILT, WITH THE MOST VISIBLE PROJECT TAKING PLACE ALONG ILLINOIS ROAD.

WE'RE A COMMUNITY THAT NOW ENJOYS 90 MILES OF MULTIUSE TRAILS.

INCIDENTALLY, THIS SPRING, WE'RE LAUNCHING A NEW DOWNTOWN BIKE SHARE PROGRAM TO INCLUDE FIVE STATIONS WITH 25 BIKES FOR PEOPLE TO ENJOY.

WE ARE A CITY MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

NO OTHER CITY CAN SAY THEY HAVE THE LEVEL OF COMMITMENT TO NEIGHBORHOODS AND INFRASTRUCTURE THE WAY WE DO.

TO BE A PROGRESSIVE CITY, WE ALSO NEED TO HAVE RELIABLE WATER AND SEWER SERVICES.

SINCE TAKING OFFICE IN 2008, WE'VE PROTECTED OVER 22,000 HOMES FROM STREET FLOODING AND BASEMENT BACKUPS.

OUR WATER POLLUTION CONTROL PLANT NOW HAS THE CAPACITY TO TREAT 90 MILLION GALLONS OF SEWAGE PER DAY - DOUBLE FROM 2008.

AND WE'RE FOUR YEARS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE AND UNDER BUDGET TO REDUCE COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS ON THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER TO AN AVERAGE OF ONE PER YEAR.

WHAT'S NEXT? WELL, THE LARGEST INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT IN OUR CITY'S HISTORY - THE TUNNEL PROJECT. IT'S CURRENTLY BEING DESIGNED TO SERVE US AND GENERATIONS TO COME.

LATER THIS YEAR, WE'LL BID THE PROJECT TO BEGIN CONSTRUCTION IN 2017.

OVER A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD, THIS MASSIVE FIVE-MILE-LONG TUNNEL, ALMOST 200 FEET DEEP AND 15 TO 20 FEET IN DIAMETER, WILL STRETCH FROM FOSTER PARK TO DOWNTOWN TO DWENGER AVENUE.

THIS IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT TO CLEAN THE ST. MARYS AND MAUMEE RIVERS.

BEST PRACTICES HAVE ALSO PLACED CITY UTILITIES IN AN ENVIABLE POSITION FOR CONTINUED GROWTH AND COST SAVINGS.

FOR INSTANCE, WE'RE SAVING A HALF MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR ON OUR ELECTRIC BILL THROUGH OUR METHANE POWER GENERATING PROGRAM.

AND, CUSTOMERS IN THE ABOITE AREA HAVE SEEN NEARLY TWO MILLION DOLLARS IN SAVINGS THROUGH LOWER RATES BECAUSE OF OUR PURCHASE OF AQUA INDIANA'S SOUTHWEST WATER SYSTEM.

I'M ALSO ENCOURAGED THAT EIGHTY PERCENT OF OUR CITY UTILITIES PROJECTS ARE DONE BY LOCAL BUSINESSES, WITH 2,000 PRIVATE SECTOR JOBS SUPPORTED BY UTILITY CONSTRUCTION JOBS.

DOWNTOWNS MAY BE THE HEART OF MANY CITIES, BUT UNQUESTIONABLY NEIGHBORHOODS ARE THE BACKBONE OF ALL SUCCESSFUL CITIES. THAT'S WHY WE'VE MADE IT A PRIORITY TO INVEST IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC WORKS AND CITY UTILITY INITIATIVES.

WE ALSO KNOW TOO THAT OUR NEIGHBORHOODS ARE FILLED WITH WONDERFUL PEOPLE DOING ALL THEY CAN TO GIVE BACK.

A FEW OF THEM ARE WITH US TODAY.

BILL CROWLEY; ELLEN FOX; DARRELL KINDSCHY; FRED LANAHAN; AND BEULAH MATCZAK

WILL ALL OF YOU PLEASE STAND.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE.

REALTORS ARE NOW TELLING US THE INVESTMENTS WE'RE MAKING ARE INCREASING PROPERTY VALUES FOR HOMEOWNERS.

TO CONTINUE THAT POSITIVE TREND THOUGH, MY ADMINISTRATION IS STARTING A NEW INITIATIVE WITH THE FORT WAYNE-BASED NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION NEIGHBORLINK TO HELP MORE RESIDENTS TACKLE HOME REPAIRS.

UP TO 40 PROJECTS WILL BE COMPLETED THIS YEAR TO HELP BRING MORE STABILITY AND PEACE OF MIND TO THOSE SEEKING ASSISTANCE.

PARTNERSHIPS LIKE THAT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE HOMEOWNERS AND THEIR NEIGHBORS.

IT'S ABOUT FUTURE GENERATIONS, TOO.

A COMMITMENT TO HOMEOWNERSHIP AND SETTING THE TABLE FOR FUTURE HOUSING GAINS RESULTED IN FORT WAYNE BEING RANKED AS THE 7TH MOST AFFORDABLE CITY FOR MILLENNIALS TO BUY A HOME.

WE WERE ALSO LISTED AS ONE OF THE TOP 10 UP AND COMING CITIES FOR COLLEGE GRADUATES.

GROWING AND PROSPERING NEIGHBORHOODS ALSO MAKE US A SAFER CITY.

AND, NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN THE SAFETY OF ALL OF YOU.

OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, WE'VE ADDED 36 NEW POLICE OFFICERS TO FORT WAYNE'S STREETS.

AND, JUST LAST WEEK, WE ANNOUNCED PLANS TO ADD 26 MORE IN 2017.

PEOPLE ASK ME, WHY ISN'T FORT WAYNE EXPERIENCING THE PROBLEMS THAT MANY OTHER CITIES ARE?

WELL, SIMPLY PUT, MY MISSION AND THE MISSION OF MY PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISION IS TO COMMIT OURSELVES TO OPEN COMMUNICATION AND EARNING YOUR TRUST.

IT'S ABOUT SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND VALUING HUMAN LIFE.

ARE THERE PUBLIC SAFETY CHALLENGES IN OUR COMMUNITY? CERTAINLY, BUT WE'RE TRYING TO ADDRESS THEM THROUGH BEST PRACTICE PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION.

AND, WE ARE SEEING RESULTS.

BURGLARIES ARE DOWN 16 PERCENT; VEHICLE THEFTS ARE DOWN NEARLY NINE PERCENT; AND PROPERTY CRIMES HAVE SEEN A DECREASE OF ALMOST FIVE PERCENT.

OUR GANG AND VIOLENT CRIMES UNIT MADE NEARLY 500 ARRESTS IN 2015 AND RECOVERED 84 GUNS.

WE'RE OUTFITTING OUR OFFICERS WITH BODY CAMERAS FOR THE BENEFIT AND SAFETY OF THEM AND YOU.

AND, MY ROUNDTABLES ON PUBLIC SAFETY WILL CONTINUE IN 2016 AS WE BRING THE COMMUNITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TOGETHER TO SHARE IDEAS,

SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, AND PLAN FOR A BETTER FUTURE.

OUR FORT WAYNE FIRE DEPARTMENT ALSO DESERVES OUR PRAISE AND APPRECIATION.

WE'RE ADDING 42 NEW FIREFIGHTERS THIS YEAR. THE INITIAL CLASS OF 17 IS OFF TO A GREAT START, AND A CLASS OF 25 WILL BEGIN THIS SUMMER.

THAT'S UNPRECEDENTED, AND IT'S A SHOW OF COMMITMENT TO ENSURING YOUR SAFETY.

INCIDENTALLY, IN 2015, THE FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONDED TO 20,000 CALLS FOR SERVICE.

AND IMPLEMENTED A PROACTIVE PLAN TO PLACE NARCAN ON ALL FIRE APPARATUS TO HELP THE SURVIVAL RATE OF HEROIN OVERDOSE VICTIMS.

OUR FIRE TEAM IS ALSO DEVELOPING AN ENERGY SAVINGS PLAN AT ENGINE HOUSES TO REDUCE OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT.

A SAFE CITY IS A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN ENJOY THE OUTDOORS, AND ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS TO TALK ABOUT IS OUR PARKS.

2015 SAW US CELEBRATE 110 YEARS OF FAMILY FUN AT THE PARKS, AND WE INVESTED NEARLY 2 MILLION DOLLARS IN PROJECTS THROUGHOUT OUR ENTIRE SYSTEM.

AND, I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO 3 MILLION MORE DOLLARS IN IMPROVEMENTS THIS YEAR.

FOR INSTANCE, PHASE ONE OF THE FRANKLIN SCHOOL PARK WILL BE COMPLETED THIS SUMMER.

AND, WE'LL BE EXPANDING SERVICES AT THE SALOMON PARK HOMESTEAD TO INCLUDE TOURS AND A SPECIAL AREA FOR BRIDAL PARTIES.

WE HAVE A NEW PROJECT READS PROGRAM AT THE MCMILLEN PARK COMMUNITY CENTER TO HELP CHILDREN REACH READING GOALS.

AND, A NEW BASKETBALL COURT AT THE JENNINGS CENTER IS HELPING KIDS

LEARN NEW SKILLS AND BUILD CHARACTER.

NOW, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I CAN'T WAIT FOR ANOTHER SEASON OF CONCERTS AT THE FOELLINGER THEATRE.

SO, AS YOU CAN SEE, OUR PARKS EFFORTS ARE A CLEAR INDICATION OF A CITY MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

HOWEVER, LAST YEAR ALONE, WE EXPERIENCED OVER FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND VISITORS TO FRANKE PARK, FOELLINGER THEATRE, AND OUR CHILDREN'S ZOO. SO MANY THAT SOMETIMES WE WERE WORRIED ABOUT TRAFFIC SAFETY.

SO, I AM PROPOSING THAT AN ADDITIONAL ENTRANCE TO FRANKE PARK BE CONSTRUCTED OFF OF GOSHEN AVENUE DIRECTLY INTO THE PARK BYPASSING THE ZOO.

A SUCCESSFUL CITY MUST ALSO HAVE OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEES DEDICATED TO PUBLIC SERVICE.

FOR INSTANCE, FORT WAYNE ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL IS THE ONLY AGENCY IN THE COUNTRY TO HAVE FOUR EMPLOYEES ACHIEVE THE HIGHEST LEVEL DESIGNATION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE PROFESSIONALS.

WE HAVE AN AWARD-WINNING 3-1-1 CALL CENTER.

AND, THIS YEAR, THEY WILL BECOME EVEN MORE ENGAGED WITH A NEW MOBILE APP AND WEBSITE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE MORE CONVENIENCE FOR YOU.

OUR FLEET DEPARTMENT HAS ONCE AGAIN BEEN NAMED A TOP 10 PERFORMER IN THE COUNTRY.

THE WATER FILTRATION PLANT RECEIVED AN AWARD FOR WATER QUALITY AND OPERATION SAFETY. INCIDENTALLY, WE'RE IN THE TOP ONE PERCENT IN THE NATION.

THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL PLANT WON A PEAK AWARD; PASSING ALL 10,000 TESTS PERFORMED EACH YEAR.

WE'RE A TREE CITY U-S-A FOR THE 25TH YEAR IN A ROW, AND A PLAYFUL CITY U-S-A FOR THE SIXTH TIME.

AND FINALLY, OUR STREET DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO BE OUR UNSUNG HEROES PROVIDING SNOW REMOVAL, LEAF PICKUP, AND POTHOLE SERVICES TO KEEP OUR CITY MOVING SAFELY AND EFFICIENTLY.

IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY WE WERE NAMED A TOP 10 BEST RUN CITY IN THE COUNTRY.

SO, THERE IS NO QUESTION OUR CITY EMPLOYEES DESERVE THE BEST POSSIBLE PAY AND BENEFITS WE CAN AFFORD.

WITH THAT IN MIND, I AM ANNOUNCING TODAY THAT I WILL BE ORDERING OUR HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR TO EVALUATE ALL OF OUR SALARY GRIDS TO ENSURE THAT CITY EMPLOYEE SALARIES EQUAL THEIR JOB DESCRIPTIONS.

AND, I WOULD LIKE TO ENCOURAGE ALL OTHER EMPLOYERS IN OUR CITY TO DO THE SAME THING.

FURTHERMORE, I WILL BE SENDING TO CITY COUNCIL A NEW PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY PROPOSAL FOR OUR CITY EMPLOYEES.

THIS POLICY WOULD COVER 100 PERCENT OF THE SALARY OF A MOTHER'S LEAVE FOR UP TO EIGHT WEEKS.

I SINCERELY BELIEVE BOTH OF THESE MEASURES WILL NOT ONLY HELP US RETAIN OUR CURRENT PROFESSIONAL STAFF BUT ALSO SERVE AS A RECRUITMENT TOOL FOR FUTURE CITY EMPLOYEES.

BUT, EVEN AS WE CELEBRATE OUR SUCCESSES; WE MUST ALSO REALIZE WE HAVE CONTINUING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN FRONT OF US.

I'M CONFIDENT THAT 2016 WILL BE THE YEAR FOR MORE RETAIL IN SOUTH FORT WAYNE.

WE'VE HIRED INDIGO CENTERS, A BUSINESS RETAIL RECRUITMENT SPECIALIST, TO LEAD THIS EFFORT.

WE KNOW THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH, AND WE MUST BE AGGRESSIVE IN OUR APPROACH.

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND NEW RETAIL SHOPS AND SIT DOWN RESTAURANTS.

WE'RE ALSO ANTICIPATING A RENAISSANCE AT QUIMBY VILLAGE THROUGH THE CREATION OF A NEW TIF DISTRICT AND THE POSSIBILITIES THAT EXIST FOR THE CLYDE THEATRE.

AS WE CONTINUE TO INVEST IN OUR CITY THOUGH; WE MUST EXPLORE ALL OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO US TO MAINTAIN OUR FINANCIAL STRENGTH.

THE PAST WORK OF THE CITY'S FISCAL POLICY GROUP HAS PLACED US IN A MUCH MORE ENVIABLE PLACE THAN OTHER HOOSIER CITIES AND TOWNS.

THIS YEAR, I'LL BE CONVENING THE GROUP AGAIN TO DEVELOP NEW STRATEGIES AND TAKE ACTION ON IMPORTANT FISCAL MATTERS FOR THE FINANCIAL HEALTH OF OUR CITY.

I ALSO SUBMIT TO ALL OF YOU THAT ONE WAY TO ENSURE WE MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION IS WITH THE LEGACY FUND.

I LED THE EFFORT TO MAKE LEGACY HAPPEN, AND I STAND HERE TODAY COMMITTED TO MAKING SURE WE CONTINUE TO MAKE WISE INVESTMENTS SO FUNDING IS HERE TODAY, TOMORROW, AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

AS WE EMBARK ON THIS NEW YEAR; I WANT TO CONGRATULATE THE NEW MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL AND OUR NEW CITY CLERK.

I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH ALL OF YOU AS WE COME TOGETHER TO FACE THE TOUGH DECISIONS THAT LIE AHEAD OF US.

AS I'VE OUTLINED TODAY, WE'RE AT AN IMPORTANT TIME IN FORT WAYNE'S HISTORY.

NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO BE CONTENT AND LET OTHER COMMUNITIES PASS US BY. WE'RE BETTER THAN THAT.

WE'RE POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS AND INVESTMENT LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

THE FUTURE FOR FORT WAYNE IS BRIGHT.

THE STATE OF OUR CITY IS STRONG.

LET'S SHOW EVERYONE WHY FORT WAYNE IS MOVING IN THE RIGHT
DIRECTION.

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

THANK YOU.