

The Mayor's State of the City slideshow presentation can be found [here](#). Community Access Television Services' coverage of this event can be viewed [here](#).

Wow, what a [fantastic video](#)!! Thank you to the video participants, for sharing the reasons why you love Bloomington. And to Laura Collins the mastermind and director. Wasn't that fun?

Good evening, and welcome. It's my honor to bring an update tonight on the State of our City of Bloomington. Thank you President Rollo, and Council Members, for the opportunity to present tonight; thank you to all our wonderful performers. And thanks to all of you here to listen, or live streaming or on CATS, to engage in the business of your city, to build community, to participate in democracy. This being the political season, many local candidates who are seeking elected office are here. Please, if you are on the ballot for a local office in the May primary, stand up or raise your hand and be acknowledged.....Thank staff and family.

We're a city where folks like Emily Bobo, our poet tonight, and Nathan Dillon, who led the band, do their creative work in community. They're in good company. Every day imaginative, hardworking, courageous, caring people enrich this city. You start software companies and kitchen shares, resettle refugees and run festivals, solarize your house of worship, offer harm prevention programs, or earn a Nobel prize. So many efforts start here, and go far.

Don't just take my word for it. Bloomington has won an incredible run of recent awards! We've been recognized on top-ten lists of the best cities to raise a family and to be an entrepreneur, and as one of the nation's most LGBTQ+-friendly small cities. For three years running, we have received a 100% rating on the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index, the only city in Indiana. We're also Indiana's only Gold winner Bike Friendly city. Just last fall, Bloomington won the Gold Medal for having the best Parks Department of all mid-sized cities in the US! The Center for Digital Government Digital Cities Award named us a top ten cities of our size for our application of information technology. Four weeks ago we won a national award for leadership in the arts from the US Conference of Mayors and Americans for the Arts. Last week we became a finalist for a Mira award as Indiana's Rising Tech City. Wow!!

[Bicentennial reflection]

This evening is a time to look back and look forward. To assess where we are and consider where we should be heading. In the newspaper today some

people shared what they wanted to hear tonight: some wanted me to address homelessness. Someone downtown parking. Legalize marijuana. Someone said they just wanted a few good jokes. (Sorry, that was the last mayor's strong suit). And one actually just requested a very short speech saying "I'm quitting."

Three years ago, in my first State of the City, I emphasized transparency; accountability; government basics; big opportunities ahead. I borrowed a motto from Dr. Seuss. "Say what we'll do. Do what we'll say." In 2017 we talked about building the world (city) we want to live in, and named four local areas of challenge ahead: energy, food, water, pre-K (all of which we have been addressing by the way). And in 2018 we of course talked about the TWOS, the big 200. We celebrated our Bicentennial in style, with 6,000 of you out on Kirkwood for the Street Fair in April. Thousands more filling downtown for the Independence Day fireworks. On your bikes for the Bike-Centennial in June.

With our Bicentennial we celebrated what we cherish about Bloomington and honored people who brought us to today. We are justifiably proud of our city. Not to pat ourselves on the back, but to thank those who brought us this far, and to redouble our efforts and improve on where we are. Our next 100 years start here. That's a big scale of time. But everything big starts somewhere. And our next century starts here. Bloomington's story, as we'll talk about a bit later, also is more than our own story. It's part of America's story. And our planet's story. Our Bloomington makes a difference. [Note to Vegas: what happens in Bloomington DOESN'T stay in Bloomington. It reaches out!] Each one of us makes a difference here. As we begin our third century, each of us has a part to play. It's impossible to imagine Bloomington at 300. Impossible. But It starts here. We know the values and qualities that will be critical to sustain here, to address such unknowns. Compassion. Kindness. Imagination. Perseverance. Inclusion. Attention to Facts and Truth. It Starts Here.

Let's take a few minutes to consider where we're starting FROM. A lot has been going on these past few years. You can check out a long list on our website. Bear with me as we recount just some of these important aspects

[Strong Economy and Good Jobs]

Let's consider the economy. Bloomington long was a hub of heavy industry, with railroads hauling limestone blocks and furniture products all over the US, and then refrigerators, elevators, color TVs. But by the time of our Bicentennial, that heavy manufacturing sector was decimated. Bloomington had to reinvent ourselves and our economy. Fortunately, our largest

employers are thriving. Indiana University grows and offers thousands of good jobs and careers. IU Health's new hospital and regional academic center is rising out of the ground with a \$400 million investment, retaining 2,700 jobs and stepping into the future of healthcare. We witnessed our first "unicorn" start-up, as Catalent bought Cook Pharmica for one billion dollars, retaining 750 jobs and within a year committing to a 125 million dollar expansion and adding 200 more good-paying jobs. Our largest private employer Cook Group is investing 100 million dollars to reopen the shuttered GE plant and add 500 more new jobs. Bloomington is a place where businesses can and do thrive!

And not just big employers. Bloomington is fertile ground for the new economy, where new jobs can grow by the dozens, or in twos and threes, as home-grown companies mix talent and ideas to make things happen. Check out all these local businesses thriving in our community. Check out many of the startups and emerging companies flourishing at The Mill, the just-opened nerve center of Bloomington's Trades District. The Mill hosts young companies like DataSprout, MetroStar, and the Bee Corp.

Our administration supports a sustainable economy in other ways too:

- Consider the String of Pearls. Projects that set the table for our third century of thriving. In between the buzzing Trades District and the beautiful Switchyard Park, the expanding convention center will transform underutilized downtown land into a lively and attractive urban core, supporting jobs, civic engagement and economic vitality throughout downtown. We're purchasing 24 acres at the current hospital property, which once it's vacated offers a new hub in the heart of downtown, a future limited only by our imagination and mutual commitment for new civic space, vibrant offices and affordable homes. Both the convention center and hospital site planning will offer extensive public engagement in the months ahead.
- We harnessed another engine of renewal for our city when Bloomington became the nation's first CDFI-Friendly city in 2018. This positions us to attract mission-oriented financing to support community-strengthening projects that are often hard to finance -- affordable housing, for example, or community facilities.
- Our exciting collaboration with the city of Columbus and the state's Elevate program, called Velocities, is bringing \$2.5 million of new venture capital and start-up support.
- And we're setting an important example as an employer having adopted the 15 dollar an hour minimum wage for our regular city employees. Would you please let state government hear us, that while they dither and deny any

increase in the meager state minimum wage, our city government has proudly gone to 15 dollars an hour here in our town!

Good jobs and good wages help our community thrive.

[Affordable Housing]

At the same time we're seeing such progress in the economy, a question faces every employee, employer, student, and resident: how do we all afford to live here? We know Bloomington has the most expensive median rental and ownership home prices in Indiana. How can we continue to retain and attract young families, artists and artisans, entrepreneurs, teachers, so many future residents -- how can we be the inclusive community we should and must be -- if we don't have decent, affordable housing for people from every walk of life?

Perhaps you are tired of hearing me talk about affordable housing, because I speak of it nearly every chance I get. I do it because it's vital. Rampant income and wealth inequality is eroding our whole society, and affordable housing is an existential challenge to Bloomington's future. People in bigger, wealthier cities we read in national stories, suffer greatly, in Seattle, Austin, San Francisco, Chicago, New York. We are not immune. The same severe pressures are coming. Are here. And we need to figure it out.

I'm pleased to report we are making real progress. In the past three years we added more than 600 bedrooms of long-term affordable housing, and more is on the way. They include units for people who were homeless, including families, and people who are earning a living wage. For low-income elderly and young workers. These projects are on all sides of town: east, west, south and north.

We've also put new tools in place: the Housing Development Fund, new ordinances allowing accessory dwelling units and pocket neighborhoods, new provisions in the draft zoning law to support affordability, and the previously mentioned CDFI-Friendly Bloomington, bringing \$14 million of public and private money together. And sometimes just plain buying available land at good prices is the best way to accomplish affordable housing.

Some exciting and important opportunities await us. I will be urging a community commitment to significant, SIGNIFICANT affordable housing in large undeveloped areas of our city -- like the 24 downtown acres at the current hospital site. And at the 100s of undeveloped acres known as Sudbury Farm -- that commitment is critical to our future together.

We are BEGINNING to make the progress we need to assure Bloomington remains open for people from all walks of life. All walks of life. Would you let the state house hear that, even when they cozy up with developers and prohibit cities from using tools like inclusionary zoning, we in Bloomington remain committed to supporting affordable housing for all.

[Quality of Life: Basic Services / Infrastructure / Arts / Parks]

Good jobs and decent housing are not sufficient. A job and a place to live, on their own, do not a city make. We depend upon our government to provide BASIC SERVICES, like safe water and sustainable mobility and public safety and sanitation. When I came into office three years ago, we had some big problems, major problems with basic services, including:

- Our drinking water quality was deteriorating at Lake Monroe, threatening to violate federal Clean Water standards
- Water pipes were bursting all over town, as they lacked a regular replacement schedule
- Fire engines were failing, stalling on the way to a fire
- Dozens of buildings and major pieces of equipment were obsolete, needing replacement
- Our entire sanitation system needed updating from a 1950s model
- Even many governing documents were long overdue for updates -- comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, transportation plan, sustainability plan

But today, entering Bloomington's third century, these basic services are back on track, with more transparency, more accountability and more efficiency and innovation than ever before:

- Our water quality now is excellent, and we're protecting Lake Monroe
- The utilities department is undergoing regular, major replacements of water mains and more
- Our transit system, fire, street and police departments have gotten the investments they need to deliver top quality services
- We implemented comprehensive sanitation reform, adding weekly recycling (remember these stickers?? Gone!!)
- Our mobility system -- roads, paths, sidewalks, trails, transit, parking -- has been upgraded with millions of new dollars to increase options and reduce our carbon footprint

- We've updated our Comprehensive Plan for the first time in 16 years, debuted a Sustainability Action Plan, and Transportation and Zoning Plans are in progress

Just a little more on the most basic of these services. Last week we shared our third annual report detailing the state of public safety in Bloomington. Check out the full presentation on the city website, but in summary:

During the last three years we have dramatically increased training and enhanced equipment for our police officers and firefighters. To maintain public safety and their safety. And promote justice. And it's working. We've seen a 32 percent decline in fire calls over the last three years. Our average response time to an emergency has been cut dramatically. In the last two years our firefighters have directly saved the lives of seven people. Seven precious lives. The fire department's national rating has improved, now placing us among top 2% of departments in the nation.

Our police department has for the first time ever earned national accreditation. Very few Indiana departments achieve this status with its nearly 200 criteria. We're exceeding state training requirements by 300%. We've created new positions such as a police social worker, and neighborhood resource specialists, to provide community connections and services that resolve situations before they become crimes. And this too is working. The last three years have seen a 10% reduction in crime rates.

We're also supporting our outstanding nonprofit partners with hundreds of thousands of dollars of direct annual funding, and please join me in recognizing two special collaborations: partnering with Centerstone to create jobs in City parks and public works efforts, and extending weekend operations at the Shalom Community Center so our friends and neighbors have options on Saturday and Sunday.

All these major improvements were done together with city council, as we have doubled the investments in these basics over the past three years, going from \$19 million to \$39 million. And all of it reflects the outstanding work of 700 plus people who work for the City. Will you join me in thanking all of these fine public servants; wave if you're among the 700!

This new efficiency is built on values of innovation and transparency in your city government: When I took office I promised to open wide the doors to City Hall. For greater access to information and a greater sense of ownership of city functions and services. We built B-Clear, a one-stop place for useful data, that currently hosts 170 sets of data about everything from city finances to energy use to potholes repaired. After conducting the first-ever scientific City Survey in 2017 (and posting the results on our website) the 2019 edition has

just been mailed to a random sample of 3,000 households. We're demo-ing a web-based service called PolCo, where, once you subscribe, you are asked to weigh in on community issues -- from trash collection to scooters, every two weeks! If you haven't subscribed yet, please do, and let your opinion be heard!

For all this and its navigability, our newly redesigned website was recognized as a Best of Indiana.

We've overhauled our annual budgeting process to include detailed goals and outcomes for every department -- what you get for every tax dollar -- and regular public tracking of progress toward those goals. A report card if you will for every department. Maybe that sounds dry and tedious, but we are convinced that the more carefully we set goals and keep track, and the more we share, the more progress we make. That same philosophy motivates our participation in the national Police Open Data initiative, and sharing detailed pavement and sidewalk conditions with TransMap. and the Traffic Bot.

Throwing open the doors to City Hall has been literal, too. I meet in my office with any city resident who requests a meeting (whether human or not), during regular open office time. And others of you visit with me and City department heads Saturdays at our Farmers' Market booth. And hundreds of you play key roles on our dozens of boards and commissions.

We all know, too, that good jobs, decent housing, and top shelf basic services also do not a city make, on their own. QUALITY OF LIFE depends on a lot more. Bloomington has been building a quality of life for 200 years and more. We remember that part of that effort through history has been remedying gross injustices, to evolve and become the city that fully welcomes into civic life many left out for too long: women, and people of color, and people speaking different languages, and people loving different people, and bringing different abilities -- becoming an inclusive city that equally welcomes all with open arms and with justice. We still have challenges, but in 200 years we've made great progress toward the Quality of Life that begins with, depends upon, is built upon, EQUALITY and JUSTICE for all. And then is enhanced by the things that add meaning to our lives, things like parks, arts, entertainment, volunteering, special events and festivals, and more and more.

Over the past three years we have together achieved big investments in and enhancements of quality of life in Bloomington. With big things on the way too. Perhaps I should start just by repeating that our City Parks and Recreation Department won the GOLD MEDAL as best parks department in the nation for cities our size in 2018. Wow!! And In May, we broke ground on the city's most ambitious Parks project to date: the conversion of a former railroad switchyard

to a fabulous urban getaway park, with ball courts, a skatepark and a splash pad, an entertainment pavilion and outdoor stage, and accessible playgrounds with shady seating for caregivers nearby. When it opens in nine months, Switchyard Park will beautifully enhance the southwestern quadrant of Bloomington and be a regional destination.

We've improved facilities, like an expanded Animal Shelter. We're planting thousands of new trees and taking care of 15,000 existing street trees. And just last year, with the support of City Council, we issued Bicentennial Bonds that will finance 7 miles of new trails, activate downtown alleyways, and establish several proud gateways to our beautiful city.

Art is in Bloomington's DNA, so my job has been to nurture and grow that thriving art culture. We've doubled the arts grants to organizations that enrich our city, increased our public art commissions--including our first six-figure commission--and our city's happening vibe keeps growing, with the Black y Brown Arts Fair, the Kirkwood Street Fair, and the Vonnegut Fest, a/k/a Gran Falloon. And our efforts netted us the 2019 national Public Art Leadership Award for small cities.

Sustainability is in Bloomington's DNA too. We're committed to responding to a rapidly changing world, which we'll talk about more in a moment. But know we've installed solar PV systems in 30 city properties, extended low-cost solar installation to almost 200 homeowners, including lower-income residents; ramped up efforts to increase access to locally grown food and invigorate the local farm economy with our Year of Food campaign; implemented changes in our water and wastewater systems to conserve water and limit runoff; planted those trees. And we've achieved Tree City USA and Gold-level Bicycle Friendly-City designations.

So Bloomington is Blooming. There is a LOT of GOOD happening in our community as we stride into our third century. And by the way, with all this going on, we also have protected our cash balances and improved our city's credit rating to a DOUBLE A. C'mon, can we get a shout out for a double AA credit rating!!?? That's saves us money today and in the future.

Of course amid this progress, real challenges continue to confront us: we have neighbors who are hungry, including children. We have fellow residents who are without a safe and decent place to live, including children. We have far too many people without healthcare in this wealthiest nation on earth. We have friends and family members who struggle every day with substance use disorder. We always want to reduce crime even further. We would like even fewer kids to drop out of school. This compassionate community works every day on these and similar issues. We invest financial and personal resources.

We build housing. We share food. We provide counseling and support and jobs, sponsor harm reduction programs and free medical care and more. We can and must and will do more together. Our community must work for people from all walks of life, at all stages in life.

We act with good intentions, and with everyone's best interests in mind...But not everything we work on at City Hall comes to pass or works out as we hope. I said on my first day in office we'll be trying some things that won't work. From the mundane -- like a new white line painted on west Kirkwood that was an inexpensive experiment to slow traffic, which it did but only by 1.5 miles an hour. To the bigger picture challenges. Sometimes we try things as a progressive city that a regressive state steps on: Inclusionary Zoning, plastic bags, solar net metering, annexation, gun control. I have to say, this state legislature seems to be looking backward. They refuse to pass a real Hate crime bill. They are close to passing a bill effectively banning abortion after 12 weeks in our state. They may arm our teachers. They shut their eyes to climate change. BUT I can pledge this: we in this progressive community will keep fighting for our future.

[Threats and challenges beyond the local front]

But here's the rub. Even as we do all we can here at home, in Bloomington, to chart our future, to take care of each other, to respond to challenges and pursue opportunities. Even if we're knocking it out of the park as a community -- and we do have an unprecedented level of very positive activity happening in Bloomington -- even now, our efforts can sometimes feel overshadowed by larger trends. It can feel like even if we get it right here at home, it may not be enough.

We know when we say It Starts Here, it doesn't End Here. What WE do matters greatly. As we walk the walk of a progressive community. But we're also in a struggle for the soul of our country. For our future. We're in a struggle over very basic issues.

Take gun violence. With 96 fellow Americans dying every day from gun violence, we mourn the continual collapse of state and national sanity on this issue. As House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said, this is a real national emergency, not a made-up, fabricated one. For progress, it really does start here. Through powerful advocates like Moms Demand Action. And in suicide prevention and de-escalation training for law enforcement, and adding a social worker and new Neighborhood Resource Specialists to our police department. Even our Youth Participatory Budgeting, to let our young residents steer some public money toward issues they care about -- like gun violence. And Maybe it

Starts Here with additional steps: Maybe, like the City of Pittsburgh did after the Tree of Life massacre, we should directly challenge outrageous state laws in acts of municipal civil disobedience, saying enough is enough. Or maybe we should join Toledo, Ohio, organizing city purchasers of firearms into collectives that insist on more responsible behavior from the gun manufacturers. It Starts Here.

It Starts Here in resisting the Erosion of Democracy we see all around us. Suppression of voting. Gerrymandering. Declaring war on the free press. Relentless and scurrilous efforts to cleave us one from another along hateful lines. It Starts Here for us to cherish and nurture the civility and inclusiveness of our city, and to operate our government with deep transparency, from B-Clear to our Surveys to dozens of boards and commissions, with inclusiveness and sensitivity, with our dozens of outstanding neighborhood organizations. To record and respond to every act of hate. To advocate for a real hate crime law in Indiana. To insist on protecting women's fundamental liberties over their own bodies. And Maybe it Starts Here with more efforts to promote democracy: Perhaps we should consider public financing of local elections? Or Youth voting? Or redistricting reform here at home?

We could, sadly, go on about external threats and just get flat out depressed. Threats to Public education. Persistent and worsening Income and wealth inequality. International conflict and refugees and immigration as wedge issues. And nuclear threats. Take a deep breath.

Let's talk about one more looming challenge. Climate Change.

The international scientific community sounded an all-alarm fire bell last October, calling on urgent measures to be taken around the world over the next 12 years to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Our national leadership has been atrocious since 2017, and strong advocacy is needed to change national policies. It Starts Here: We know we have an energized community of advocates. Fighting for carbon taxes. For mobility options. For energy conservation. For attention to science. And we've dramatically increased local solar energy. We've got the best mass transit system in the state: we bought 18 new busses in the past 3 years, versus 10 in the previous six years, including hybrids and our first all-electric on order.

We continue to make major investments in mobility infrastructure and options to reduce single-driver, fossil-fuel-powered automobiles. We've affirmed the Paris Agreement locally. We've adopted a local sustainability plan, which will guide our actions, and we've declared 2019 the Year of Food, to improve our sustainability in this most basic part of our community. And Maybe it Starts Here with more and new efforts: Maybe we should offer more direct grants for

more solar (we helped 12 low-income homeowners, but 27 more applied)? Maybe we should find new revenue for enhancing our transit system?

And tonight I am announcing a new step. I am announcing the formation, within the next 60 days, of a local task force to examine a big challenge that links energy, mobility, food and infrastructure. Fact 1: About 40% of the waste in our community is compostable. Over 100 tons of compostables are being landfilled every day. Fact 2: locally we use over half a million gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel annually for city operations -- busses, plows, trucks and more. Fact 3: Our largest wastewater plant protects our environment but is nearly maxed out, and needs to be expanded soon, at a cost of many millions of dollars.

Perhaps, we can address all three of these challenges at once. I'm directing this new task force to evaluate whether and how we might convert our wastewater plant to an ANAEROBIC digestion process, which could turn local compostable organic material into compressed natural gas, saving landfills and reducing methane release, and creating a local fuel source to power our own public vehicles. This is a complex and expensive challenge, but one we ought to tackle together. I'll ask for a report within a year to recommend a path forward. It Does START HERE.

So much to do, and It Starts Here. In our beloved Bloomington. We're 200 years young. We're starting our third century. We've got a lot going for us, and a lot going on around us, sometimes to us.

Sometimes, when the global news is dark, or obstacles keep arising, it's good to remember faces of our friends and neighbors -- maybe some you saw in that opening video. It Starts Here.

And remember this. We are not alone. We're one among hundreds of cities where it starts. Where it is starting. People just like us work on these same issues locally in progressive cities all across our country, indeed the world. We are a FORCE together. We are not alone. There is POWER in local movements. Yes, regressive states and an abysmal national government can be obstacles. They can preach divisiveness. They can try to roll back basic liberties. They can ignore income inequality or climate change or political corruption or gun violence or lack of health care. But there is a great RESILIENCE, shall we say RESISTANCE, or PERSISTENCE!, in our country, community by community. People galvanized to make things better. Everywhere.....Do NOT UNDERESTIMATE the power of communities, one by one, and together, working on these issues. We can change the world.

And remember this too. Bloomington is so very connected to the world. We are changing it every day. Thousands of people from outside our city, from

around the world, come to our city every year, and thousands leave us and move all over the nation and globe. Not many cities our size have the global connections that we do. We live together here, all kinds of people from all over, and create a progressive, caring, inclusive community. Many of us stay. Some go from here to every country in the world and carry things back. We welcome visitors from around the world, every year at Lotus World Music Festival, every day at Indiana University. DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE the power of individuals who know each other, who know each other's culture and hopes and dreams, to change the world for the better. To avoid conflict or war. To grow in compassion. To defeat demonizing or dividing. It Starts Here.

What happens here does change the world. Think about a company launched in a spare bedroom in the Bart Villa apartments on Second Street. Today stents made by our home-grown Cook Medical literally keep hearts beating all across the world.

Think about the people of Catalent, who recently manufactured an experimental therapy shipped from Bloomington to the Democratic Republic of Congo to treat patients infected with the terrifying and deadly Ebola virus.

Think about a new company housed at The Mill, founded by Ellie Symes who belonged to the Beekeepers Club while a student at IU. Ellie won an Indiana rising entrepreneur award last year, and now the Bee Corp uses sophisticated technology to monitor beehive health and protect this critical global resource for our food.

And just last week four Bloomington firefighters returned from a State Department funded trip to Sierra Leone. That started here, when Fire Chief Jason Moore met a group of Mandela Fellows visiting from Africa. After the chief's presentation, one of the visitors from Sierra Leone told him of a tragic fire that had killed several of her family members, and of the woeful state of fire preparedness in her country. From that meeting here, Chief Moore launched a partnership that took four of our firefighting professionals to offer a week of instruction in Freetown, Sierra Leone. That is a beautiful connection. We have invited, and hope to welcome several firefighters from Sierra Leone to participate in this year's training for our own new firefighter recruits in Bloomington. They would become the first professional, internationally certified firefighters in their country.

One day, perhaps a Freetown family will be saved from a fire because of this. Perhaps they will visit Bloomington. We don't know. We probably never can know. But we do know what happens here matters. Every day. With every one of us. For every one of us. We know It Starts Here. What do you love about Bloomington? What do you see for our next century? It Starts Here. Let's Go!!

Thank you, and good evening. We are adjourned