

2017 State of the City Address

I often tell people that I have the best job in the best city in America. That has never been more apparent than tonight.

Thanks to all of you for being here. And, thanks to the Columbus Division of Police for presenting the colors; Caine Long and Jachiah Perry for leading us in the pledge of allegiance; and Brianna Neale for that outstanding performance of our national anthem.

We have accomplished a great deal in my first year as your mayor, and I have many, many people to thank for that. But, before I go any further, I need to stop and thank two individuals who have given so much to our community – City Auditor Hugh J. Dorrian and City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr.

For more than five decades, Hugh Dorrian's steady leadership has secured the city's financial position and afforded our community the opportunity to thrive, to grow, and to invest in the future of generations to come.

Though he's been known to point out that, as city auditor, he doesn't make policy, anyone who has visited the auditor's office to pitch an idea knows his endorsement can make or break the best laid plans.

I can tell you that Auditor Dorrian has made a tremendous impact on the policies that have helped shape the city we know and love today, and he deserves enormous credit for our success.

Auditor Dorrian, thank you.

City Attorney Pfeiffer, thanks to you as well. For 16 years, your steadfast counsel has kept Columbus on track, and your commitment to Columbus neighborhoods has never waned.

In fact, one of my first memories as a new member of Columbus City Council was hopping in Rick's car after a Monday night meeting to check out concerns we had just heard from a resident on Dakota Avenue on the Hilltop.

This kind of outing is what's known around City Hall as a "mosey," which is really just the city attorney's way of assuring that he, his staff and anyone who wants to ride along never forgets why we are here to serve the public.

City Attorney Pfeiffer, thank you for your many years of outstanding service to Columbus.

I do wonder though... in my first year as mayor, I've managed to run off two of our longest-serving, most valued public servants.

I have to ask: Was it something I said?

Well, whatever the reason... my parting gift to you is that this is the LAST State of the City speech you will ever have to attend.

For everyone else here tonight... sorry about your luck.

I would like to thank Congresswoman Joyce Beatty for being a leader and a source of support.

Special thanks to the members of Columbus City Council: President Zachary M. Klein, President Pro Tem Priscilla R. Tyson, Councilmembers Elizabeth C. Brown, Mitchell J. Brown, Shannon G. Hardin, Jaiza N. Page and Michael Stinziano.

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

Thank you to the Franklin County Commissioners, President John O'Grady, Marilyn Brown and our newest commissioner, Kevin L. Boyce.

Thank you to Columbus City Schools Superintendent Dr. Dan Good and the Columbus Board of Education, Franklin County Coroner Dr. Anahi Ortiz and all of the elected officials here tonight.

I'd like to recognize all the other elected officials who are here tonight. Would you please stand? Thank you for your service.

And, thanks to my outstanding cabinet and my staff, especially my chief of staff, Greg Davies.

Most of all, I want to thank my daughter and especially my wife, Shannon. I could not ask for a better partner in life and in service.

You received a fact sheet tonight that illustrates many of our accomplishments

over the last year. And you just watched a video that put faces with a few of our initiatives.

The investments we've made... the success we've realized in neighborhoods around Columbus... and the diverse, passionate voices of those helping to reduce infant mortality, expand access to high-quality pre-k, and to create jobs, is just a sample of the incredible strength that defines our city.

Indeed, as I stand with you this evening, the state of our city is strong.

Columbus has the fastest growing economy in the Midwest, the lowest unemployment in 25 years and a Triple-A bond rating from all three rating agencies.

We continue to attract new residents from across Ohio, the U.S. and the world – not to mention thousands of visitors, contributing millions to the local economy, lured by great amenities and amazing people.

In fact, J.D. Power just ranked Columbus highest in visitor satisfaction in the Midwest. This award serves as confirmation that we are an open, welcoming community, and it is the reason we continue to land major conferences like the 2019 American Society of Association Executives Annual Meeting, projected to bring over \$500 million in visitor spending to the city.

There is no mistaking that Columbus is a great city. It is the city where I was born and raised and where I now have the incredible privilege to serve as your mayor.

However, as great as our city is today, we have an obligation... a responsibility to ensure that every family in every neighborhood is sharing in our success.

While two-thirds of Columbus may be doing well, unfortunately one-third of our neighbors are still struggling to get by.

Too many babies die before their first birthdays; too many children are struggling to succeed in school; too many of our residents are hungry, homeless and unable to find affordable housing.

Too many of our neighbors are working too hard, for too little pay, unable to support a family, let alone plan for the future.

And, too many live in fear – some because of the crime in their neighborhood, and some because of threats – old and new – of bias, discrimination and persecution.

However, at a time when some are trying to divide our country with fear, Columbus is embracing unity.

We are a more diverse community than ever before. Our city of over 850,000 is made up of more than 327,000 people of color... 102,000 foreign-born residents... 43,000 veterans... and 34,000 LGBTQ residents. Some project the region will grow to three million by 2050, so we can expect our diversity will continue to serve as a source of strength for our community.

Columnist David Brooks noted recently that if you want to observe history, go to Washington. But if you want to participate in the process and help define the future, the most important place to be right now might well be cities like Columbus.

Because unlike many states, and certainly unlike our nation's capital, cities are the center of innovation, reform and prosperity. Right now... right now... we have the opportunity to tackle our biggest challenges.

We know the barriers. And we know that government bears some responsibility for those barriers. Some neighborhoods have been cut off from the prosperity other parts of Columbus enjoy. In some cases, literally.

The highway system separated downtown from other neighborhoods like King-Lincoln and Linden. Houses in predominantly African-American neighborhoods were bulldozed to make way for the new roads. For the first 162 years of our city's history, Columbus allowed discrimination in employment and housing – full equal protections weren't passed until 1990. During that time, residents in some neighborhoods were "redlined," or denied loans to buy homes.

Other areas, like the West Side, suffered from de-industrialization. Manufacturing jobs that had provided a good and stable living to thousands of families for generations, left. Neighborhoods like the Hilltop, near where we are tonight, endured decades of high unemployment.

Today, it is easy to see where our opportunities lie. Our friends at The Ohio State University City and Regional Planning Program created maps you see behind me that show neighborhoods with the highest rates of infant mortality and unemployment.

These same neighborhoods have higher rates of violent crime, fewer options for reliable, consistent transportation, less access to healthcare and fewer places to buy healthy foods.

It is critical to remember that for our neighbors who live in these areas, this isn't just a color on a map. It is what they live with and fight against every day.

Now is the time to make tangible, long-lasting changes in the lives of all of our residents. Now is the time to set clear goals, even if they lack simple solutions.

It will require us to acknowledge and accept that decisions made in the past have contributed to systemic inequalities many Columbus residents are experiencing today. While division based on race and class are part of our history, we will not allow it to define our future. We must face our challenges – head-on – motivated by hope and opportunity, not fear and distrust.

This is not a one-year agenda, but a multi-year plan. We will try new approaches, we will make adjustments, and we will keep working to move our entire city forward.

I have great faith in our ability to make change because we've done it before, and we will do it again, leveraging the strength of our many neighborhood assets.

St. Stephen's Community House... the Reeb Center... the United Way Neighborhood Leadership Academy and Fresh Foods Here... South Side Thrive Collaborative... Shalom Zone... Health Sciences Academy... our community recreation centers, area commissions, civic associations, block watches and community organizers and advocates.

These are amazing community resources, made up of committed people – many of whom are in this room and on this stage with me. They are the type of partners that every neighborhood needs to overcome adversity.

Our work started a little over a year ago, and it continues today. We will build on these assets in each of our opportunity neighborhoods and invest the resources to lift up those who have been left behind.

Together we will make Columbus America's Opportunity City.

Infant mortality remains a key indicator of the health of a neighborhood, the "canary in a coal mine" that tells us how a community is fairing.

The stark reality is this: Columbus has a higher infant mortality rate than many cities that are larger, more diverse and that have fewer resources. New York City has a lower infant mortality rate than we do. In Columbus, 150 babies die every year before their first birthday and African-American babies are 2.5 times more likely to die before their first birthday than white babies.

Since 2014, we've invested a great deal of time and resources to reduce our infant mortality rate through the collaborative effort called CelebrateOne. We've enlisted partners like the United Health Foundation and The Ohio State University College of Nursing. In 2016, we distributed more than 1,000 cribs to new mothers who could not afford them. We graduated our first Connector Corps class that put "boots on the ground" to educate new mothers and check on new babies.

But despite our investments, we have not had the impact we want... yet.

I will not compromise on this initiative. Now is not the time to back down; it is the time to double down.

There should be no confusion: CelebrateOne is a key priority of my administration. Now, more than ever, we must concentrate on creating a system in which no expectant mother or mother of an infant falls through the cracks of our social safety net, regardless of her income, her background or her neighborhood.

Tonight, I am pleased to announce the promotion of Erika Clark Jones to lead the CelebrateOne initiative. Erika is a veteran public servant. I have elevated her to a position that will report directly to me – just like members of my cabinet. Her word is my word.

I am also calling on you – as individuals, community and corporate partners – to join Erika and me in support of CelebrateOne's safe sleep program. Last year over 400 people were trained on the ABCs of safe sleep: Babies should ALWAYS sleep Alone, on their Back, in a Crib.

Anyone can become a safe sleep ambassador, and we need more champions for the future residents of our city. This year we are expanding the opportunity for parents, grandparents and caregivers alike to receive this free training throughout our neighborhoods.

I am setting the goal of 500 new sleep ambassadors this year. It's not a lofty goal – if just 100 of you in the audience right now committed and got five friends to commit, too, we would already be there.

Together, we will cut the infant mortality rate by 40 percent and the racial disparity in half by 2020.

As many of you know, I grew up with brothers and sisters, including many foster children under my parents' care. Sometimes there were as many as four additional

kids in the house at one time.

I remember my mother being asked more than once who her favorite child was. She would always say, “The one who needs me most.”

In the last year, many of you have heard me say that my top three priorities are neighborhoods, neighborhoods, neighborhoods. I have paid special attention to the Hilltop and Linden because they have needed us the most. But just as my mother cared for her family, we have continued to invest in all of our neighborhoods.

The priority CelebrateOne neighborhoods – the Hilltop, Linden, Southside, Near East, Marion Franklin, Northland and Franklinton – are our opportunity neighborhoods, even as we continue to invest in the health, safety and quality of life of all Columbus residents.

In Linden, we will work with residents to develop a community “master plan” through the Neighborhood Design Center and The Ohio State University. This plan will create a roadmap for safe neighborhoods, economic development and access to affordable housing, quality healthcare, education and employment opportunities.

Neighborhood transformation efforts like those in Weinland Park, the Near East side and the Southside are successful when the planning process includes robust resident involvement; public, private and nonprofit partners; and the dollars needed to make the plan a reality.

To that end, we will have a detailed, community-driven plan for Linden by the end of 2017, followed by a plan for the Hilltop in 2018.

I want to recognize Councilmember Jaiza Page -- who grew up in Linden -- for her commitment to the masterplan.

We also thank United Way of Central Ohio and Janet E. Jackson, President and CEO, for their \$1 million commitment to Linden and Southside. We invite other partners to invest with us in our opportunity neighborhoods. There is room for everyone at the community development table.

Mobility is the great equalizer, giving residents access to major job centers, healthcare and education – which is why we chose Linden as a pilot for some of our Smart Columbus projects.

In Linden, we will leverage cutting edge transportation technology with trip planning and paying options integrated into a single application so residents will have more convenient access to jobs, schools, fresh foods and doctor appointments.

We just held a two-day Smart Columbus planning event at St. Stephen’s Community House and heard from residents about what they need in terms of transportation.

It won’t all happen in 2017 – we are just at the starting line. But it will happen by 2020 – and beyond. And in the process it will draw more partners to the region for sustained economic growth and development.

What we learn and accomplish in Linden, we can take to other neighborhoods throughout the city and region.

I want to recognize Councilmember Shannon Hardin for his tireless and continuing work on Smart Columbus.

On the Hilltop, residents can expect a \$5 million investment in Blueprint, which will use green infrastructure to improve water quality and protect homes. I want to thank Councilmember Michael Stinziano for his dedication to neighborhoods in Columbus and especially to the Blueprint project.

The newest Boys & Girls Club of Columbus located in the J. Ashburn Jr. Youth Center will offer new and expanded opportunities for young people on the Hilltop. This is made possible by the Westside Community Fund, a partnership between the City of Columbus and Hollywood Casino. I look forward to the official kick-off this summer.

In addition, the fund is contributing dollars to the Westmoor Park and the Wilson Road Park, which are stops along the Camp Chase Trail that will provide West Side residents with miles of off-road trail for transportation and recreation.

And while the community master plan for the Hilltop will be completed in 2018, we will not wait to move forward for our youngest residents. In the Hilltop, fewer children are enrolled in quality pre-kindergarten than anywhere else in the city. We must act now.

Tonight, I am announcing the Hilltop Early Childhood Partnership. The goal is to double the number of children enrolled in quality pre-K in the Hilltop by 2020.

The partnership, chaired by Jane Leach, a known champion of early childhood education, will include quality early childhood providers on the Hilltop, as well as Columbus City Schools, Franklin County and community members. Our lead advocate is Doug Borrer of Borrer Communities – a native of Columbus and a longtime community leader. You don’t get any more Hilltop, USA, than the Borrer family. We are grateful for their commitment.

This year will bring new sidewalks and refurbished traffic signals to Marion Franklin, specifically along Fairwood Avenue between Wayland Drive and Watkins Road.

On the Southside, we are working to redevelop the last two vacant parcels on the former Schottenstein site. A total of 122 affordable housing units as well as retail space along Parsons Avenue will begin construction this year.

Our Recreation and Parks Department will upgrade Indian Mound Recreation Center to serve the growing Southside neighborhood with a new gymnasium and fitness room as well as art rooms, a teaching kitchen and other community gathering spaces.

For Franklinton, developers Kaufman and CASTO will be starting mixed-use development projects. The city has worked with both developers to ensure that these projects maintain affordable housing options in the neighborhood.

The Westside Community Fund is making significant contributions to Franklinton, including a \$300,000 investment to open a nonprofit grocery store operated by Lower Lights. Those on a limited income will be charged a sliding fee for fresh fruits, vegetables and healthy prepared food options.

This spring, Boys & Girls Club of Columbus will open the Sullivant Avenue Teen Center in West Franklinton. It will provide a safe space, access to mentors, and guidance towards the many paths to the middle class, including post-secondary education, a 21st century career or military service. I am grateful to the State of Ohio, The Columbus Foundation and other private donors for their partnership.

And as we announced yesterday, the headquarters for Smart Columbus is moving to the Idea Foundry in Franklinton. Co-leaders Mike Stevens, the city's new Chief Innovation Officer, and Mark Patton, the vice president of the Columbus Partnership, will lead the 'start up' effort that is Smart Columbus.

In the Near East, the city is close to completing facilities in Poindexter. Seniors are now calling it home. More families will move in this spring. When construction is complete, we will have added a total of 420 new units of mixed-income housing.

In addition, tonight, I am announcing that we have heard the community, and we will preserve the final two buildings of the old Poindexter Village. I applaud the advocacy of the James Preston Poindexter Foundation and its leader, Ms. Reita Smith for their work on this museum. We will work with the Ohio History Connection to create a Central Ohio African-American History Museum at the site, making a significant contribution to that effort. I would also like to recognize Council President Pro Tem Priscilla Tyson for her important work on the project.

The opening of Huntington's new office complex at S.R. 161 and Cleveland Avenue this year will bring a boost to the Northland area. Huntington has also committed to investing \$300 million in lending to low-to-moderate-income neighborhoods in the next five years. Huntington Bank has been an excellent partner to the City of Columbus and its residents. I'd like to take a moment to recognize Stephen D. Steinour, CEO of Huntington, for his leadership.

Throughout Columbus, in every neighborhood, public safety has, is, and will continue to be the single largest investment the city makes each year. More than two-thirds of the city's budget is dedicated to police and fire.

Being at the James Jackson Police Academy tonight was deliberate. We are in the very place where our police officers gain the training they require to serve and protect – twice the training the state requires. This is a place of honor for police, and where the values that guide their actions are instilled.

We will add two new police classes this year, and we will continue to invest in the tools and technology necessary to keep Columbus police officers and our residents safe. This includes a nearly \$10 million investment in body worn cameras, with more than 500 officers outfitted by year-end.

As you know, body worn cameras are one of my highest priorities because they are another tool to help protect our officers, the public and the public's trust. On March 2, we will have a public forum with the NAACP to showcase the body-worn cameras and hear from the officers who have been using them.

Likewise, the 2017 budget continues to invest in the police Community Safety Initiative. As we have done every year since the program started in 2003, we have reevaluated the Community Safety Initiative, helping it evolve to meet community expectations, while continuing to make neighborhoods safer.

Our overarching theme for the program is every resident... on every street... in every neighborhood deserves to be safe.

This year, the Community Safety Initiative will focus on gun violence, juvenile crime and high-level felonies – based, not on neighborhoods, but on where crime is occurring. And not just in the summer, but throughout the year.

The program reiterates that plainclothes officers will primarily gather intelligence

and perform surveillance. Uniformed officers will be responsible for enforcement. Commander Gary Cameron, who will again oversee the initiative, has made it clear that this has always been the directive, but it will be emphasized in 2017 Community Safety Initiative. Thank you, Commander.

Neighborhood outreach, police ride-alongs and education efforts will also continue. Our goal is to help Columbus residents better understand police operations and lay the groundwork for new community-based policing strategies, including a new volunteer civilian patrol.

I look forward to working with Council President Zach Klein to develop a pilot program that will partner with Columbus residents to patrol their own neighborhoods. At the community's request, this direct investment in neighborhood safety will complement the Community Crime Patrol, which has helped Columbus neighborhoods for more than 30 years.

The outstanding work of our Columbus Division of Police has been under the direction of the Chief of Police Kim Jacobs. Her progressive and responsive commitment to our body-worn camera initiative and retooling the Community Safety Initiative, as well as her tireless work in the community, deserves our respect and admiration. Tonight, I am pleased to announce that I have extended Chief Jacobs' contract and she will remain our Chief of Police into the future.

We added a new class of fire recruits at the end of 2016, and two additional recruit classes will begin before year-end. We are working to better align resources, achieve greater efficiencies and reinvest the savings to add new fire stations and firefighters in growing neighborhoods.

In April, we will re-open an improved Station 2 on Fulton Street, and for the first time since 2003, we will expand the existing number of fire stations with the construction of Station 35 on the East Side.

For both fire and police, we must increase the diversity of our safety forces to reflect the beautiful diversity that is Columbus.

This year we will apply for a U.S. Department of Justice COPs grant. If awarded, we will be able to dramatically increase the size of our minority recruitment unit, hire additional police officers and focus on strategies to recruit women and minorities to join the ranks of Columbus police and fire.

This enhanced recruitment strategy will help identify successful candidates and direct, mentor and guide potential recruits through a new partnership with Columbus City Schools and Columbus State Community College to prepare students for a career in public safety. In addition, the Department of Public Safety, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Civil Service Commission will work to enhance employment opportunities for underrepresented groups.

Perhaps most significant, the City will change the make-up of the two boards that score the civil service exam for police and fire, adding a neighborhood representative to each. This will give Columbus residents an unprecedented opportunity to shape the future of our safety forces.

I would like to thank Councilmember Mitch Brown for his dedication to expanding diversity in our police and fire divisions.

Last year, Shannon Ginther and I seated the inaugural class of the Columbus Women's Commission – a diverse group that will work to break down barriers to success for all women in our community. Thank you, Shannon, for leading this effort as Columbus' First Lady.

I would also like to recognize Councilmember Liz Brown for her work on women's issues and for being one of our commissioners.

The important work of the Columbus Women's Commission has already begun. Moving forward, it will focus on four pillars: pay equity; workforce development; housing; and health.

The problems are real. One in four women in central Ohio lack basic economic security. Women are two-thirds of the minimum wage workers. And in Columbus, women working full-time make 78 cents for every dollar a man earns – which is even below the national average for pay equity. Women also face a benefits cliff, where accepting a small raise can mean losing help with child care or health insurance.

To stress the importance of this work, I am adding a representative from the Columbus Women's Commission to report each week to my cabinet. I am pleased to announce that Shelly Beiting is joining us as Executive Director of the Columbus Women's Commission.

While Columbus as a whole is experiencing the lowest unemployment in decades, some residents struggle to find employment that can support a family. Poverty has declined in many parts of the city, but grown deeply in other areas. I am committed to finding avenues to help residents access the training and support they need to break the cycle of poverty.

Last year, Lisa Patt-McDaniel was named the President and CEO of the Workforce Development Board. She is working on strategic ways to get coaching and placement services into our neighborhoods.

In addition, she is evaluating what types of jobs will be available in the future and the training they require. As Columbus becomes a city with smart transportation, for example, we will need people trained and educated to fill those jobs.

We know that two-year and four-year colleges are not the only pathway to the middle class. I am committed to expanding career based training in Columbus. In 2017, we are creating a Construction Trades Education Fund in conjunction with Columbus City Schools. The City of Columbus will put in the seed money of up to \$1 million to create new career based training programs that begin earlier so that students are prepared to enter pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.

That is our investment, but we are still looking for private partners to expand the program even further and give more young people in Columbus the chance to be trained in the trades.

The challenges we face are intensely local. A mom and dad coping with a child addicted to heroin. Kids who need a safe place to go after school. Young adults desperately seeking a way out of poverty.

One of the first things I learned when I joined Columbus City Council was the enormity of some of the issues facing us, and the daunting fact that there are no simple solutions. The other thing I learned was that these challenges don't stop at city limits. Poverty, education and heroin addiction are regional problems – and so are the solutions.

I have spent the first year of my administration meeting with suburban mayors and city managers across the region to build relationships and open the lines of communication. Now, under a new spirit of regional cooperation, we can look for ways to tackle these issues together.

Recently, Columbus and Franklin County – along with the rest of the country – have been faced with an unprecedented epidemic of drug addiction that leads to increases in crime and the enslavement of women and young children in human trafficking. It is a public health crisis.

According to the Franklin County Coroner's office, two people in central Ohio die every day from the disease of heroin addiction.

While many people and many organizations have taken steps to address the heroin crisis, we need a unified regional approach to fight this epidemic. In the next few weeks I will be bringing together the Council President, County Coroner, County Commissioners and our Columbus Health Commissioner to explore real tangible solutions. There is no time to waste, our families are suffering, and it will take all of us to conquer this disease.

I would like to offer my thanks to Council President Zach Klein for recognizing this crisis and for his work fighting it.

The Recreation and Parks Department is taking a collaborative regional approach for enhancing youth and family development at 11 neighborhood community centers aligned with the CelebrateOne priority neighborhoods. We will partner with Franklin County to provide career exploration and job development for 14 to 24-year-olds and work with our nonprofit partners like YMCA of Central Ohio to provide after-school education services in these centers of opportunity.

We will continue to look for partners like our teammates at the Columbus Blue Jackets and Columbus Crew SC to bring their investments to those 11 community centers as well.

Our focus on regional solutions also extends to how we deliver core city services. That is one of the reasons we are launching the first operations review of the city since 1999. The city's last operations review helped streamline city departments and paved the way for enhanced city services.

Our operations review will ask, Are our city departments and services aligned with the priorities of a 21st century city? What efforts are we duplicating with the county and state? How can we deliver more efficient, cost effective services to our residents? This review will help us reimagine city government, making our city even better.

Part of our operations review is making sure we stay fiscally responsible. We're the only city of our size with a Triple-A bond rating from all three rating agencies, saving taxpayers tens of millions of dollars a year and allowing us to invest in new roads and sidewalks and protect clean drinking water.

Our outlook is bright. But we all know that the economy fluctuates. Now, while we are strong, I am committing to increasing our Rainy Day Fund to \$80 million by 2020.

Maybe what I've outlined tonight sounds like a lot. Maybe some of you are thinking, "This is too much." But I'm not looking for quick fixes. I didn't run for

mayor to lounge in the glory of our past successes – of which there are many.

I want to make substantive changes that will elevate the lives of individuals, provide stability for families and revitalize our neighborhoods.

It's no accident that we're here on the Westside, in the Greater Hilltop area. Anyone who has spent time on the Hilltop understands the proud history of this neighborhood and the strident, independent nature of its residents.

I am committed to lifting up the Hilltop and every neighborhood in Columbus to help us reach our collective potential.

Look around this stage... at who I'm with... and who is sitting shoulder to shoulder.

This is "us."

Not just part of a logo, but who we are: police officers, firefighters... civic leaders and faith leaders . . . organized labor, business leaders and entrepreneurs.

We are neighbors. This is "us".

And we are all that we need to make Columbus a place for all of us.

Friends, I do not stand before you tonight to tell you that "I alone" have the solutions to all our challenges. On the contrary, I am here to tell you that it will take all of us, working together to reach our goal to make Columbus America's Opportunity City.

Whether we are working to make our neighborhoods safe and strengthen community-police relations, reducing infant mortality, promoting the inclusion and advancement of women and minorities or confronting the suffering of heroin addiction, it will take all of "US," united, to work together to chart a better future.

Michael Bloomberg, the former mayor of New York City, wrote recently that the new presidential administration may dominate the headlines in the coming years, but the biggest changes in the way we live will be driven by the cities.

How fortunate are we to be living in a city that can tackle some of our biggest challenges in ways that the state and the nation cannot?

And how blessed are we that we get to lead and write the next chapter for Columbus?

Thank you and God bless.