

# Mayor Pete Buttigieg's Remarks as prepared for the 2017 State of the City Address

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Thank you Principal Bayingana, Dr. Spells, Imam Sirajuddin, Council President Scott, and thank you to the Riley High School Jazz Band for that great performance.

It is a pleasure to be here at one of the great high schools in the South Bend Community Schools system, and I am thankful for the many good things taking place in our public schools. From John Adams High School, whose Mock Trial team again won state and is headed to national competition this May, to Washington High School where I joined the League of Women Voters last week to talk with students about voting and civic involvement; from Clay High School which just put on a terrific performance of a play tackling tough issues to right here at Riley where two students were honored by the state Chamber of Commerce for their work with the Bowman Creek Educational Ecosystem; there is a lot going on in our schools to make us proud.

I want to thank and acknowledge our City Clerk, Kareemah Fowler, our Common Council members, and all officials and dignitaries attending this evening. And I want to thank everyone who has joined us tonight for taking time to hear about just some of the significant developments in the life of our community.

As you probably know, I spent a large portion of the first two months of this year campaigning for a national leadership position in the Democratic Party.

Many people lately have paid me the nuanced compliment of sharing that they are glad that I was not elected, so that I could remain here and continue to serve South Bend. And having had mixed emotions about the prospect of leaving this job for that one, I feel much the same way. Though I entered that competition with every intention of winning, now that it is over, I am wholeheartedly delighted about the chance to continue my second term as mayor.

Every intense experience brings the gift of perspective, and that was certainly true of the weeks I spent traveling the country, interacting with leaders from every state in the union. In reflecting on the experience, the biggest thing I drew from it is a deepening of my convictions about problem-solving at the local level.

It used to be the case that local government was regarded as a kind of minor league, with more serious and sophisticated work taking place at the state and federal level. But the more opportunities I have had to witness how our national policymaking works, the more convinced I am that political salvation for our country will come from the local.

It is in cities and towns across America that the most sensitive and important issues actually play out, from police-community relations to the development of our infrastructure. In telling South Bend's story across the United States, I had endless reminders of how our work, here in this community on a daily basis, touches every issue of importance to how people live.

Today, South Bend is on a roll. After a long and challenging transformation, we are now seeing the strongest growth in a generation when it comes to jobs, population, and prosperity. We are now more than halfway through what will certainly go down in history as South Bend's turnaround decade, and the best is yet to come.

Tonight I would like to share some of the most important progress, and suggest what it will take to rise to the challenges and opportunities ahead. Today all of us who serve the City, from the newest hourly employee to the mayor, can draw energy from the importance of our mission: to deliver services that empower everyone to thrive.

There are three lines of effort that allow us to meet that mission. We make the basics of life easy by providing for the essentials. We invest in people and places so that our city is a truly great place to live, work, and visit. And we offer good government so that the very way we do business embodies the values that guide us in our daily work: the values of excellence, accountability, inclusion, innovation, and empowerment.

In service of this mission, we have begun redesigning our budget from the ground up, using a priority-based framework to make decisions based not on how we've always done things, but on what our residents consider most important. After a thorough process of collecting internal and external input, last year the team established six priorities for South Bend: a safe community for everyone; robust, well-planned infrastructure; a strong, inclusive economy; thriving public spaces and culture; vibrant, welcoming neighborhoods; and residents empowered with

education, mobility, and technology. Alongside these community goals, we laid out the necessary internal priorities to ensure that residents can always count on a well-governed and well administered city.

From now on, our major decisions will be organized around these goals—the central priorities that drive all of our administration’s work—and tonight’s remarks will be organized around them too.

Safe community for everyone

In operating a government just as in operating a vehicle, safety comes first. For a family, a country, or a city, all the things we do depend first on our being able to take safety for granted. This is one reason government exists in the first place, and we recognize it as our most fundamental obligation.

When it comes to crime and police, we are determined to continue the approaches that help to explain why South Bend is one of the urban areas in our region that did not see a sharp increase in gun violence last year. In fact, victims of criminally assaulted shootings fell from 85 to 81, and the number of fatal shootings fell significantly from 16 to 11. While homicides went up 14% nationally in one year, they went down here in South Bend. We believe this is partly due to the Group Violence Intervention, a partnership that involves local and federal law enforcement and prosecutors, social services, and community leaders.

The work of police has never been more important, more sensitive, or more scrutinized. In our community, we know that it is not only possible but necessary to be strongly supportive of our men and women in uniform, and strongly supportive of fairness and racial justice. We are not immune to the tension that exists in many communities around America between police departments and some of the neighborhoods they protect, but we have the benefit of deep relationships between our neighborhoods, activists, and our law enforcement family.

In the mayor’s office, we routinely monitor the number of cases that lead to the use of force, and the number of complaints about officers. Last year the number of complaints filed and sustained, as well as the overall number of uses of force, all went down, as did the number of citizen complaints. In the interest of transparency around these issues, last year South Bend joined President Obama’s national Police Data Initiative to ensure the public can access this information. We have placed information concerning complaints and training on the city’s Open Data Portal, and next month we will begin publishing data on use-of-force incidents as well.

Complaints about the conduct of officers are rare, but they are taken very seriously, and I want to be sure residents understand how discipline is handled. The final decisions around major cases of officer discipline are made by a panel of five appointed citizens who are racially diverse, highly respected in the community, and have an important and sometimes thankless task. The Board of Public Safety is one example of a “citizen review board,” and there are many different forms of citizen review board around the country. Among the different models of citizen review board, our version is among the most powerful, since it makes decisions, not just recommendations. We support and thank them for their important work.

For every high profile case that reaches the Board of Safety, there are countless stories of model community policing that best demonstrate our values. Our police athletic league, which joins officers with local youth to provide mentorship through sports, has over six hundred participants. Patrol shifts competed for the “flatfoot” award to see who could perform the most walking patrols. And in cases ranging from the lifesaving rescue of a severely injured 8 year old boy, to the apprehension of the so-called “pillowcase burglar” in partnership with other area departments, to making sure all of the presidential candidate visits went smoothly last Spring, our officers continue to do extremely important work, mostly out of the spotlight.

So we can have the best possible Department, we have undertaken a number of reforms, including streamlining the organization chart and a new emphasis on training. Our newly negotiated four-year contract makes us one of the most competitively paid departments in the region. But we do face severe challenges in manpower after a number of retirements and departures. Force strength is down to 227, a number that is simply not sufficient, and so growing the force must be a major priority in the coming year. At the same time, this represents an opportunity to shape the force with new members, new experiences and new talent. We want anyone who has ever considered a career in law enforcement to know: South Bend is hiring, and we want the best.

We are also partnering with Mishawaka and the County to deliver a next-generation 911 center that brings area agencies onto the same system. Dispatch center employees are now all working side-by-side in a new facility, and we are in the process of moving toward full integration by this summer. The process has been challenging but I have appreciated the cooperation of various agencies to ensure safety and cost-effectiveness.

Meanwhile, our Fire Department reached a major milestone this year when the Insurance Services Office rated us as a Level 2 Fire Department. This makes us one of the top fire agencies in the state and places us in the top 2 percent nationally. The Fire Department has also worked hard to boost recruiting from inclusive sources of applicants, attracting the highest level of minority and female applicants ever, while maintaining the highest standards for our hiring process.

To ensure our residents have the benefit of excellent fire facilities, the City has begun the process to replace Fire Station 4, located on Olive Street, and Fire Station 9, located in a historic River Park building and unsuitable for modern equipment. After a great deal of community listening and creative problem-solving by Fire Department leadership, I was pleased to announce last week that we have found an excellent location which does not require encroachment on any park space.

Many things that affect safety that are beyond the reach of our police and fire departments. One example is the threat to health from lead paint present in some older homes, particularly in low-income neighborhoods in our city. In order to address this, we have been working closely with the County Board of Health.

In December, City and County officials were made aware that certain areas of South Bend had unusually high percentages of children who tested with elevated blood-lead levels between 2005 and 2015. While this is a long-standing issue, the recent statistics prompted a very healthy increase in visibility. To better support County efforts, the City has increased funding for lead abatement through the South Bend Housing Improvement Program grant, pledged \$100,000 in matching funds for the PHA HUD lead abatement grant, and is exploring possibilities for local legislation that would lead to the testing of homes prior to sale or rental.

We are working to get the word out that parents cannot simply assume that your doctor is testing your children for lead. Testing is free for those on Medicaid, and free at the St Joseph County Health Department for all children under 7 and all pregnant women. Residents can also request a free environmental risk assessment from the County Health Department. I want to stress that these test results are not related to our water supply, which meets or exceeds all environmental standards.

This issue is a reminder of our responsibility as an administration to support public health. While the City has no specific officer, staff, or funding for health, we will continue to actively support other health authorities in ensuring we live in a safe environment, especially for children. Our city also took a step in the direction of better health when smoking in our bars and restaurants came to an end this year, and it is a pleasure to see these business establishments thrive with clean air.

On another safety and health matter, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the working group established by my office to help address the issue of homelessness. The group, which includes representatives from social service agencies, businesses, city and county government, and residents, is working to develop a strategic plan for addressing chronic homelessness in South Bend. Their recommendations will be delivered, after extensive community engagement, by July of this year.

In addition, our ability to tackle some of the toughest cases of homelessness will take a major step forward later this year as the FUSE project, a collaboration with South Bend Heritage, opens this fall, with 32 units of permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals.

And the City, in partnership with the regional Continuum of Care, has also entered the national Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness last November, and will continue with this effort until we are able to say that no person who served our nation in uniform will go without access to shelter.

Unfortunately, many members of our community have come to feel particularly unsafe or vulnerable as a consequence of the current national political climate and uncertainty over federal immigration policy. This is one reason I am glad we are leading the way in our state with the creation of the South Bend Municipal ID Card. This card allows anyone who can prove who they are to identify themselves for purposes ranging from routine retail transactions to interactions with law enforcement, making all of us safer. Best of all, it lets anyone say they are a card-carrying resident of our city.

Here at the local level, we can combat the climate of increasing fear and anxiety among residents who live peacefully and work in our community. We want to make sure that all who live here understand that this is a city that supports everyone who is here to contribute to our community positively, regardless of national origin or religion, and I want to emphasize that our law enforcement officers are not responsible for federal immigration enforcement, but for keeping the people who live here safe. All of us.

On a foundation of safety rests our second major priority: robust and well-planned infrastructure.

When people think of infrastructure, they often speak of trains, planes, and bridges. But much of our vital infrastructure is completely out of sight. Some have argued that the most important invention ever, besides the wheel, is sanitation, and if you ever doubt the importance of the humble sewer, consider what life would be like without it.

Our sewer and wastewater planning continues to be affected by the federal requirement that we manage our combined sewer overflow, or CSO. The good news is that fresh analysis has shown that we can deliver the required environmental improvements for hundreds of millions of dollars less than expected in the original 2011 agreement—if the federal government allows us to update the plan. It is too

soon to know how the new federal administration will address these negotiations, but we will work hard to arrive at a cost-effective answer that still meets our legal and moral obligations to ensure clean water in our area.

Meanwhile, it is imperative that we act to provide adequate drinking water infrastructure for immediate needs and the longer term. Our Utilities team has done extraordinary work making older pipes and equipment function safely and effectively, but this cannot continue without new investment. Our public works team has identified over \$88 million in capital needs, which has prompted us to prepare an adjustment to South Bend's unusually low water rates.

After a year of public discussion on this topic, last night, the South Bend Common Council acted to take this important step. The Council approved a rate increase that will raise \$22.5 Million over 5 years which can be used for fixing broken down pumps, rehabilitating non-functioning wells, and replacing broken water mains, valves, and fire hydrants. Supplemented with TIF funding, this will meet the most urgent and critical of our water infrastructure needs—and even after the increase, our water rates will be lower than most comparable Indiana cities. I thank the Council for taking seriously our shared responsibility to provide clean, safe drinking water.

Back above ground, we are working to ensure that roads are in good condition despite increasingly tight funds. At the current level of funding, we are able to pave every lane-mile of street in the city roughly every one hundred years. That's not good enough, which is why we are closely following House Bill 1002, a road funding bill in the state house to better enable us to fund our neighborhood roads and streets. After 14 years without any adjustment to the gas tax, this could deliver needed funds that we can use immediately for paving, pothole repair, and other vital projects. The legislature is also considering a measure to index the gas tax to inflation, a common-sense move that would prevent future funding from getting caught up in politics. I have crossed party lines to support this Republican-sponsored House bill, and we hope that it will pass before the session ends in April.

In addition, we are working with TRANSPO to support their efforts to deliver great transit to the community. Last year, the first city-funded bus shelters were installed on the West Side along Lincoln Way and Western Avenue, with more planned for 2017. We are also working with the TRANSPO team to use new technology for evaluating route adjustments to better connect residents to jobs, and providing real time information to riders on bus activity in the network.

Speaking of transportation, we have been presented with a truly game-changing opportunity with the potential for a faster South Shore Line connection to Chicago. With double-tracking improvements and a relocation of the train's path to the airport, the vision of a one-and-a-half hour train trip to downtown Chicago is truly within reach. We are in close contact with South Shore management to develop a regional partnership with the state that could raise the necessary funds. South Bend will have to do its part. If we can achieve a 90-minute train ride from here to Chicago, every single neighborhood in our city will benefit. The potential for increased jobs and population is tremendous.

#### Strong Inclusive Economy

Of course, the infrastructure work getting the most attention of all is the ongoing Smart Streets effort, which brings me to the third major City priority: a strong, inclusive economy. Smart Streets is as much about economic development as it is about streets.

The bulk of the road work is now complete, and contractors have until June 1st to complete all signal and streetscape work. A year ago in this address, I warned that there would be disruption and, perhaps, a level of grumpiness as daily commutes were affected by the construction. But the decision to do in one year what would ordinarily take two or three has paid off, tearing off the band-aid and ensuring that most of the construction-related inconvenience is already behind us. I am thankful to the public for their patience during the heavy construction phase.

While this initiative enjoyed strong support from the downtown business community and the common council, I am aware that its overall popularity is... mixed. So I would like to take this opportunity to briefly revisit the reasons why we undertook this project.

America's best downtowns are not bypasses or through-ways, but destinations. Ensuring complete streets—which means streets with two-way traffic and ample room for pedestrians and bicyclists—leads to a more vibrant city because people are more inclined to spend time on a pedestrian-friendly sidewalk than a narrow path along a four-lane, one-way highway that serves to evacuate vehicles from our city at top speed.

We are already seeing many of the economic benefits. For example, the renovation of the Chase Tower, the restoration of the LaSalle Hotel, the conversion of the JMS building, the renewed façade at Main Street Row, and the new hotel at the former College Football Hall of Fame, are all projects involving major private investment—over \$63 million total—from investors who have each publicly said that the Smart Streets project was an important factor in their decision to invest here.

The project also gained national attention, including the Mayor's Challenge Success award from U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, which we accepted on the city's behalf at a ceremony in Washington—the first time in recent memory that our City has been directly recognized by a U.S. Cabinet Secretary.

By design, traffic calming does mean that vehicles move more slowly in the central business district. Then again, we live in a city where you can traverse the entire central business district in five minutes or less. Right now, according to Google data, you can drive from here at Riley High School on the South Side to Memorial Hospital on the north end of Downtown, in 13 minutes, up to 15 minutes in rush hour. It used to be more like 11 or 12 minutes. As the cost of having a truly great downtown, we can afford those two or three minutes.

Bringing a new streetscape to the heart of our city has not been simple, with many issues coming up including a forgotten underground vault in the project area, and issues with entry to the Colfax Parking Garage during highly attended shows at the Morris Theater. But we are working through these and believe that by the time we celebrate completion of the project, very few people will be able to honestly say they would rather go back to the old way.

The timing of this project helps us capitalize on a major economic resurgence. Overall, our city has seen 4,499 net new jobs since this administration began in 2012, with the unemployment rate cut by more than half even as labor force participation increased by over one thousand in the same period. This administration has sought from day one to establish that South Bend is open for business. That's why we have simplified and streamlined processes, and supported growth in every part of the city. From industrial developments near the airport, to hundreds of new residential units downtown, to the opportunity for a full-service grocery on the East Bank, since the beginning of last year the Department of Community Investment has supported over \$261 million in private investment representing up to 651 associated jobs. All this with \$34 million in public investment, or about 7 private dollars for every 1 taxpayer dollar of support.

And there is much more where that came from: with manufacturing facilities in the Adams Road area, the Marriott Hotel under construction on the former Hall of Fame site, The Ivy at Berlin Place to open by next year's opening day for the South Bend Cubs, phase two of Innovation Park and Eddy Street, and more, we can expect the months and years ahead to be filled with more celebrations, ribbon-cuttings, and most importantly: new jobs.

When it comes to growing the economy, cities can no longer think, in blinkered terms, only about what happens within their own borders. In a connected and globalized economy, that mentality is ultimately self-defeating. We need to understand that our region shares a common economic fate, and this is the insight of the state's Regional Cities program, which compelled us to come together with other counties and cities in our region. The result was our region winning a \$42 million competitive grant from the State of Indiana, which we are using for efforts ranging from the Riverfront Parks and Trails to the reinvention of the Studebaker assembly building.

Still, we recognize that no matter how good the total job counts or the topline numbers, an economy is not truly strong if it is not truly inclusive. Societies that experience great inequality perform more poorly than those that are economically and racially integrated, and we must pay close attention to inclusion if South Bend is to truly consolidate her comeback. Parts of our community experience concentrations of generational poverty, and that not everyone has benefited from or had access to the economic growth around us.

This is one reason we have sought to lead by example when it comes to making sure there is adequate pay for all in our community. State law prevents cities in Indiana from establishing any community minimum wage, but the City of South Bend acted in last year's budget to increase the minimum wage paid to City employees to \$10.10, one year ahead of schedule. We urge other employers in our area to look at wages and join us in this, knowing that economic evidence shows a stronger economy whenever we do this as a society, and knowing that doing so will make South Bend a community of choice. We also decided to voluntarily implement new overtime rules put forth by the Department of Labor even though a court prevented them from becoming mandatory. In the years to come we will continue to seek ways to lead by example and do right by workers, evaluating leave and family policies to ensure we model the kind of economic participation we would like to see across the region.

We also work to ensure development takes place across neighborhood and geographic boundaries. That's why we are thrilled to see more industrial development taking place on the West Side. And it's why in addition to paving the way for a future downtown full-service grocery, I was pleased to be present for the opening last week of a new Martin's location on Western Avenue, building on improvements to streetscapes and parks facilities on the city's West Side. The West Side, and every side, of our city deserves great places to shop, work, and play, and we will continue to work to make sure that happens.

We must also confront that a legacy of racial injustice continues to result in inequality across our country, with South Bend no exception. In our community, racial minorities face poverty rates up to 33 percent. Equality of opportunity is one reason we became involved with the White House's My Brother's Keeper program,

an initiative to ensure equality of opportunity for all, including young men and boys of color. Driven by a community coalition and anchored at Memorial Hospital, this initiative has three central goals for our young people: getting a healthy start and entering school ready to learn; keeping kids on track and offering second chances; and successfully entering the workforce. We will closely track infant mortality rates, third grade reading scores, juvenile arrest rates, labor force participation, and disparities in the unemployment rate to ensure we are making progress toward these goals.

In keeping with the desire to practice what we preach, we are working as a city to deepen our commitment to working with small businesses as part of our city Diversity and Inclusion plan, so that being newer, smaller, or owned by a historically disadvantaged group is no barrier to doing business with the city. We are partnering with the Latin American Chamber of Commerce to offer small business support through seminars on how to build small businesses and compete for contracts, and we will be in contact with the Council about refinements to our city's diversity utilization policy.

We also continue to work to compete for new residents, especially veterans, who can benefit from the Vets Community Connections program. Staffed by volunteers and routed through 311, this initiative lets veterans and military families get key information about how to settle into our community, and we are always looking for more volunteers who want to take part—just call 311.

We continue to work with area employers and labor organizations on Workforce Development, ensuring that the economic ladder is available to everyone and that our employers will have access to a superb workforce in order to grow and succeed here. Through our Pathways partnership with WorkOne, the city has directed nearly half a million dollars to train workers in some of our most important industries - healthcare, building trades and manufacturing - and has placed over 100 local residents into employment.

#### Thriving Public Spaces and Culture

Wealth alone does not make a City great, nor can a great economy develop in a city with no distinctive cultural or recreational life. That's why another stated goal is to ensure Thriving Public Spaces and Culture.

In this address one year ago, I promised that we would develop a new way to manage quality of place, and a year later we are pleased by the successful establishment of a new department in the City of South Bend: the Department of Venues, Parks, and Arts. Bringing under one roof the formerly separate teams from parks and recreation, Morris and the Palais, Century Center, management of DTSB, and our involvement in arts and cultural activity, we are closer to unlocking the full potential of a community that already punches above its weight class when it comes to cultural and recreational life.

The City now has entirely new categories of parks facilities, from South Bend's first dog park on Niles Avenue to the Aerial Adventure Park at Rum Village. And the new department has set to work immediately using the resources provided by the Parks Bond to enhance public space everywhere. I want to again thank the Common Council for supporting this bond, which has enabled a number of recent improvements. For the first time, we have an air-conditioned gymnasium at the Martin Luther King, Jr., recreation center. New basketball courts and pavilions have been installed at Fremont, Kelly Park & Kennedy Parks on the West Side, while an expanded parking lot will serve Potawatomi Park on the east side. Needed roof replacements came to Pinhook Pavilion in the Northwest, and Rum Village Nature Center on the Southwest side. And we have been able to address dozens of deferred maintenance needs on playgrounds, restrooms, picnic areas, and public spaces. And as soon as testing confirms the site is in good condition, we plan this year to begin construction on a \$4 million renovation and expansion of the Charles Black Center which, after temporary closures for construction, will be a truly outstanding facility for a generation to come.

Soon we will be embarking on an ambitious program of enhancements to the Riverfront Parks and Trails, aware that the river that gives our city her name is also one of the most important treasures we possess. The improvements will include a replacement and upgrade of Howard Park Recreation Center, a new combination ice skating facility and splash plaza in Howard Park, and upgrades throughout the riverfront trail system to improve safety, accessibility, ecological integrity and connectivity. Much of the funding for this vision is already in hand, but our community will need to come together to find the resources to make the most ambitious elements of this vision into a reality.

Meanwhile, we are partnering with the University of Notre Dame to use the power of our river in new ways. A hydroelectric turbine will be installed beneath Seitz Park to power an estimated 10% of the university's electrical needs. Beginning this October, Seitz Park will be offline for an 18-month construction project. We thank the public for its patience, which will be rewarded upon completion when a \$1 million commitment from the University will support a newly redesigned Seitz Park while the turbine demonstrates this region's commitment to sustainability.

We are also making sure that our public spaces reflect our values and our heritage. That's why I was pleased, after an abundance of community input and deliberation

by a citizen committee, to unveil the new Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, renaming one of our most prominent downtown streets after one of America's great leaders whose message is as resonant and timely today as ever. This also created the opportunity to rename the former Martin Luther King Jr. Drive for one of our own moral lights, Charles Martin Sr., whose mentorship and support for youth in our community lifted up generations of South Bend residents.

And later this year, Leighton Plaza on Main Street will feature a distinctive new piece of public art: a life-size statue commemorating the historic occasion when Notre Dame's President, Father Ted Hesburgh, stood arm in arm with Dr. King calling for justice at Soldier Field in 1964. The statue will invite passersby to join their hands with these two leaders, symbolically participating in the ongoing struggle for justice and equality.

This year will bring great developments not only in our physical spaces but in special events as well. The Venues, Parks, and Arts team is currently hard at work on a new event which we are calling the Best Week Ever.

The Best Week Ever will be a week-long celebration of our Culture, Creativity & Progress filled with 2-3 signature events each day. It begins Memorial Day, May 29 and will carry through the following weekend, June 4. Each signature event—including the West Side Memorial Day Parade, Meet Me on the Island, Sunburst Races and a special 90s Concert at Four Winds Field—will be peppered with unique experiences created by local businesses, neighborhood associations, churches and more. We encourage anyone who envisions something special for the Best Week Ever to visit [Bestweekever2017.com](http://Bestweekever2017.com) for more on how to participate and get involved.

A great city not only has great shared spaces and activities, but also makes sure the most immediate areas around us—the neighborhoods where we live—are vibrant and welcoming, and this is our fifth major priority in the budget.

With strong efforts from the Code Enforcement department and leadership from the Common Council, we have worked to tear down the barriers to safety and comfort in every neighborhood. Our Code Enforcement Department is seeing increased effectiveness and compliance. We also continue to benefit from the chronic nuisance policy established in 2013—a successful policy now in danger due to state legislation that threatens to block cities from enacting these common-sense neighborhood policies. It is the latest example of state pre-emption of local government, and we hope that the legislature will return to the bipartisan principle of local control.

This was also the first year for landlord registration, a policy to ensure that the city can contact the owners of properties when issues arise. Already we have had nearly 4,000 properties registered by over 800 owners, and are working to refine the system for collecting this data.

Of course, the most positive energy in our neighborhoods comes from within the neighborhoods themselves. Whether it's the Local Cup, a pay-it-forward coffee shop in the NNN, or West Side Wednesdays, which delivered a free family festival on Western Avenue in December as well as help with future events coming this summer, we see residents coming together with pride to enhance the neighborhoods around them.

Right here by Riley High School, the Bowman Creek Restoration Project continues to harness the talent from local colleges and universities and use it to empower neighbors in a previously neglected area. Students and volunteers helped build 9 rain gardens, worked on smart sensors for monitoring the gardens and creek, and took on other activities to remediate the area.

This year we will be undertaking a thorough review of our neighborhood policies to ensure they are up to date for the opportunities and challenges ahead. This includes continuing to find productive uses for vacant lots where collapsing houses were removed as part of the 1000 Houses in 1,000 Days effort, engaging more closely with the South Bend Housing Authority, working with the Neighborhood Resources Council to support neighborhoods, and ensuring that we have a shared community vision about the role of planning. We must move forward with plans that are both feasible and ambitious, making sure we are faithful to the intention of our plans but never allowing ourselves to be trapped by them, never permitting the perfect to be the enemy of the good.

The sixth of our six major goals is to ensure all residents are empowered with education, mobility, and technology. We need to look beyond the traditional, direct, and obvious responsibilities of city government to ensure we are doing all we can to make sure residents have what they need to thrive.

There is no better example of this than education. The City needs to be an active partner with the schools in our community, and especially with the South Bend Community School Corporation. That's why we are in communications now about a new model for framing and formalizing that cooperation: a Schools Compact that will formalize the commitment of the City and the School Corporation to support one another in key areas. Our intention is to organize cooperation around four central components of the educational ecosystem in South Bend: empowered students, strong schools, career-ready graduates, and an engaged community.

We will work together with the School Corporation to make sure that students have the economic and social resources that empower them to succeed in school; to strengthen our schools with diverse, talented educators and safe infrastructure; to set rigorous standards and develop new partnerships for ensuring students graduate on time and prepared for success in careers or college; and to engage our community in the growth and progress of South Bend students. I have been in preliminary conversations with our Superintendent, Dr. Spells, and interested board members, and we hope to present language to the School Board and the Common Council for consideration before the end of the year.

Our commitment to youth also inspired the South Bend Youth Task Force, which selects and empowers a diverse group of students from all schools in our area to discuss and solve problems that matter to them. They have chosen to sink their teeth into some of the most challenging issues in our community—like violence among youth—and sponsor town halls and dialogues in schools and in the community to help address them. These young people make me proud and give us great hope for the future leadership of our city.

In addition, we must pay close attention to ensuring children arrive in school with a good foundation to begin with. The current version of the Indiana legislature's pre-Kindergarten bill acknowledges that this is an important area but does not provide the funds for a dramatic change in availability. Sustainable funded pre-K is good economic sense. It allows more parents to enter the workforce and is a well-researched investment in the health and success of children. And so we will not only advocate for more statewide activity in early childhood, but will continue to explore strategies to make high-quality pre-K available to every child in South Bend.

Like education, the ability to physically move around our city is one thing that can make or break a resident's ability to thrive. This is one reason why we have embraced a policy of complete streets in the City, so that those who rely on bicycles and pedestrian mobility can better take advantage of city life. Since low-income and minority Americans are more likely to bike for transport and walk or bike to school, this is also a matter of equity. Being pedestrian and bike-friendly is important to all of us, and we are now actively exploring the implementation of a bike share system to enhance transportation choices in partnership with MACOG.

When it comes to technology as a way to empower residents, we are a city that recognizes the relationship between technology and equity. To address the digital divide, we have expanded on downtown Wifi with free connectivity now available at the Martin Luther King and Charles Black recreation centers, helping connect over 2,500 users in 2016. Meanwhile, the private South Bend Code School has done remarkable work in locations ranging from the Robinson Community Learning Center to the Juvenile Justice Center. Students from 11 to 16 years of age have built over 100 websites and created 24 civic apps aimed at improving their community.

Meanwhile, our Innovation team has been working with Notre Dame's Wireless Institute to pursue a major grant from the National Science Foundation to use our city as a pioneering test bed—a living laboratory—for the latest wireless technology, creating new economic strength in our city and region.

All of these gains are enabled by the way we do business as an administration, guided by internal principles that add up to a well-governed and administered city. We strive to be a great employer with great employees, making sure not just our compensation but our workplace climate make us an employer of choice. We cultivate enduring financial strength, continuing to have one of the top bond ratings in the state, AA, and preparing in advance for the strain that the 2020 fiscal "curb" will place on our finances. We aim for excellent services and efficient processes, using the data from our 311 center to drive better decision-making and using performance data to guide management decisions through SBStat, a data-driven management program modeled after leading cities and pioneered by Baltimore.

Keeping it this way means making sure we make the best use of our physical and technical assets. Behind the scenes, we are working to realign our purchasing and central services departments to save taxpayer money. And the IT strategic plan has been largely implemented, with an improved help desk running at one-third of the cost of the old system, and other updates helping us to save up to a \$1 million a year while delivering better technology to help our employees serve the public. Also out of the spotlight but extremely important is the continued work on transparency. Our Department of Law recently passed the milestone of 10,000 records requests processed in this administration without a single finding of violation. Meanwhile legal claims have declined each year since 2013 by a total of more than two-thirds, thanks to enhanced training and excellent legal work, further saving taxpayer dollars.

We continue to work on both high-tech and old-fashioned ways to interact with the public. Mayor's Night Out allowed over 150 residents to sign up for direct conversations with me last year, while 311 answered over 150,000 calls last year alone.

Last but perhaps most importantly, we seek to be an administration that models our values of Excellence, Accountability, Innovation, Inclusion, and Empowerment. To highlight the importance of these values, we have begun an employee recognition program that has already brought forth inspiring stories of leadership by our employees.



None of this is possible alone, not even for our terrific administration team. We rely on partnerships at every turn, and will continue to do so in order to get things done. Whether it's our Bowman Creek Educational Ecosystem, with involvement from Ivy Tech, IU South Bend, and the University of Notre Dame, or our civic innovation work sponsored by the Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities program; whether it's the vital role played by our local hospitals on efforts from My Brother's Keeper to the Group Violence Intervention; we are dramatically better off thanks to the nonprofit, philanthropic and educational institutions that support our city's growth. In the business world, we have partners at every turn on efforts ranging from economic growth in our industrial areas to the continuous enhancement of Four Winds Field by Andrew Berlin and the South Bend Cubs. Speaking of Four Winds, one of our most extraordinary partnerships took a major step forward last year when the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians were federally recognized. This makes our city the first and only place in Indiana to have tribal land. And thanks to a generous agreement with the Tribe, the restoration of their tribal homeland will yield major benefits to our City, too, as millions of dollars in revenues from the planned gaming facilities are committed to the enhancement of our economy and the betterment of our children.

We also collaborate with county, state, and federal government—and these partnerships will experience considerable change in the months and years to come. The County-City relationship will become more important than ever, and we will build on current collaborations like the Building Department, the 911 Center, and our involvement with the Health Department to explore working together in new areas like collaborating with our Human Rights Commission to address discrimination. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the work that the County Assessor is undertaking to ensure the latest data and techniques are applied to support truly fair assessments and stabilize property tax revenue.

Under the Obama administration, the City enjoyed a number of fruitful partnerships with the White House and other Federal agencies, from My Brother's Keeper to the MetroLab Network of city-university partnerships and the Let's Move effort to combat childhood obesity, for which South Bend was recognized at the White House by First Lady Michelle Obama. It is too soon to know all the ways in which the new administration will be different in its dealings with South Bend, but I will say that the initial budget released by the administration would have severe implications for all cities, including South Bend. The proposed elimination of CDBG and HOME funds, to take just one example, would mean \$4 million less going into our City.

Every decision in Washington has implications here at home, however indirectly. Take the actions that took place just a few hours ago to reverse the previous administration's actions on climate change. This is not a remote issue. Consider the extreme rainfall event that damaged or destroyed hundreds of homes in our City and surrounding area in August. Statistically, this was considered a "thousand-year" rainfall, and it represents three times the biggest rainfall ever recorded, which was in the 1930s. It seems extremely improbable that this weather event, which is exactly the kind of extreme weather that scientists have warned us about for decades, is pure coincidence. South Bend will be better off if officials in Washington are serious about addressing issues from climate change to immigration reform. We will monitor these issues closely, and work with allies like the U.S. Conference of Mayors to ensure the local perspective is taken seriously in Washington.

Last but not least, I want to emphasize our relationship with the State of Indiana. Not every decision in the state has benefited our city. I mentioned earlier our concern with actions that will pre-empt City authority and take power away from local government. But we are also currently benefiting from forward-thinking state initiatives like the Regional Cities of Northern Indiana effort. I know that our delegation of state Representatives and Senators is working hard to advance the interests of our region. I sat down with our new governor, Eric Holcomb, last week in his office, and he spoke of his commitment to progress in our part of the state in areas from economic development to public health. I let him know that the City of South Bend looks forward to working with him to benefit our community and the state as a whole.

Tonight I have shared just a select fraction of the activities taking place in our administration and across our community that should make South Bend proud. We are not shying away from the challenges we face, but each year we are not only addressing our greatest challenges but seizing opportunities that would have been difficult to picture just a few years ago. To continue this momentum our city will need to be ready to face an uncertain future with continued fidelity to our values and commitment to our priorities.

Amid all the noise in media and politics, I have never been more convinced that our city is headed in the right direction because of our shared values: excellence, innovation, accountability, inclusion, and empowerment. No matter the unpredictable headwinds and tailwinds of our times, this is a City of people who know how to support one another. And we know that our City—big enough to matter, small enough to be nimble and original in how we solve problems—can continue to be a place where everyone is empowered to thrive.

