

State of the City 2019

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Members of the City Commission, City Manager Dickstein, distinguished guests, members of the city staff, friends and neighbors: thank you for joining me here today.

In Dayton, we are proud of our past. Since the early pioneers built Newcom's Tavern, Dayton has been a destination for people seeking opportunity -- opportunity to make a better life for themselves and their families. Dayton has nurtured generations of creative, inventive, and generous people who have helped form the backbone of our nation's middle class.

But when we look more deeply at our history, we see that opportunity was never equally distributed in Dayton. Some of our neighbors were never invited to join fully in our city's prosperity. As we determine where to go from here, it's important to acknowledge that history and examine how it continues to impact us today.

Today I'm excited to talk to you about the past so that we can lay out a shared vision as to where we go from here. There is so much to celebrate, as many of the investments we've seeded have started to bear fruit. We are building a foundation for a stronger future -- one that can provide opportunity for every Daytonian to thrive.

When I began my first term as mayor, I called upon leaders and stakeholders from across our city to come together to declare Dayton a City of Learners. That initiative to make sure our youngest residents have the supports they need to learn and succeed is now beginning its sixth year, and I am so pleased with the progress we have made.

We have deepened our partnership with Dayton Public Schools. We have convened a table with DPS, local unions, and other partners to create better pathways for Dayton students to enter apprenticeship programs. These programs launch young people into high paying jobs directly out of high school, and still provide them with the opportunity to complete a degree if they choose it. Apprenticeships are critical for ensuring that all Dayton students have an opportunity to participate in the new economy, even if they do not want to attend college.

I am really excited about our region's gains in educational attainment. Between 2010 and 2017, our region saw a six percentage point growth in the share of adults with at least an associates degree. That is more than double the growth rate of the state or the nation as a whole over that same time frame.

One of our most important investments has been in our youngest learners. In 2016, Dayton voters approved an income tax increase that funds our Preschool Promise, guaranteeing affordable, high-quality preschool for every four year old living in the city of Dayton.

After a full year of operation citywide, preschool students made significant, measurable gains in their readiness for kindergarten. Dayton four year-olds enrolled in preschool exceeded expectations for annual growth in their school readiness, as well as their social and quantitative knowledge.

These are extremely exciting results, but there is still more work to do to make sure that we close the achievement gap – making sure that our kids of color have the same opportunities as their white peers.

While we try to build the workforce of the future, we also have to support the entrepreneurs that will create their jobs. It is difficult for us to even imagine what jobs may look like 20 or 30 years in the future given all of the ongoing change in our economy.

What we do know is that there is a great entrepreneurial spirit here in Dayton that will help grow and keep jobs in our community for the long-haul. Our partner, The Entrepreneurs Center, helps support these budding business-owners with a variety of services. There are currently 81 startups in their portfolio, and these businesses have attracted more than 26 million dollars of venture capital and created 164 jobs since just 2017.

Our own Minority Business Assistance Center is contributing to this as well, helping entrepreneurs of color write business plans, access credit and compete for contracts. In 2018, businesses served by the MBAC created 136 new jobs in our community.

Another example of our investment in people is seen in our response to the opioid crisis. It's no secret that Dayton has been hard hit by this crisis that has resulted in a rash of overdose deaths. But it is also no secret that our community has proven to be extraordinarily resilient in the face of this human tragedy. We are investing in people by supporting an infrastructure for recovery from addiction, and our efforts have become a model for other communities to follow.

Due in part to the great work of leaders from across our community, overdose deaths fell by almost fifty percent from 2017 to 2018. But even one death is still too many.

Several weeks ago we released a report with the Center for American Progress documenting our community's response to this crisis so that others can learn from it. The author of that report is Erin Welch, a recent graduate of Carnegie Mellon's graduate public policy school who I met through her sister.

Erin wrote an excellent report, but what makes her contribution really special is her personal connection to the issues it describes. A little over a year ago, Erin's brother Sean died from an overdose. Her sister worked for me at the time, and I witnessed first-hand how wrenching his struggles with addiction were for their family.

But like many in our community, Erin chose to use her own tragedy to help find a solution to this crisis. The report she produced has already been requested by cities across the country who are looking for ways to help people find recovery in their own communities. Unquestionably, what Erin produced will make an impact on other families that are dealing with addiction.

I want Dayton to be known as the place that figured out how to move past the stigma of addiction and instead treat it like the disease that it is. What that means in practice is people like Erin sharing their talents – whatever they may be – to help others that are facing this extremely

difficult disease. And I see that here in Dayton every day. I am so proud of the numerous recovery organizations, government and law enforcement agencies, and dedicated individuals like Erin that have come together to truly make Dayton a community of recovery.

I am also very excited about the progress we are making through investments in our downtown and neighborhoods. We have focused our initial energy on revitalizing our downtown core. Research has shown that cities with weak real estate markets must make sure their core is strong before the market can recover in neighborhoods.

And the market in downtown Dayton is strong and gaining strength! There has been \$1 billion in investment in downtown over the past decade. Public dollars were important for rebuilding market confidence, but in the last several years, we've seen private investors step up to the plate as well.

And there are plenty of new amenities for people living and visiting downtown to enjoy. The Levitt Pavilion opened in August – breathing new life into an underutilized part of the core. I was especially thrilled to see the diversity of acts and concertgoers attending Levitt shows last summer.

Additionally, we are very close to crossing the finish line with one of the most meaningful and complicated redevelopments in downtown, the Dayton Arcade.

The redevelopment of the Arcade is a good symbol for Dayton's renaissance, not just because we will be revitalizing buildings in our downtown. The Arcade will also become a critical site for innovation and entrepreneurship in Dayton, with the University of Dayton and The Entrepreneurs Center collaborating to create the Arcade Innovation Hub. The Hub will help connect people with ideas with the resources they need to make them a reality, helping us to grow high-quality jobs right here in Dayton.

As I have said before, all of this work downtown is not just for its own sake – and we are already beginning to see how new market confidence is leading to renewed investment in our neighborhoods. This is particularly true in the historic districts next to downtown, where we've seen new residents move in and fix up homes.

And in the face of serious challenges, we've also seen neighbors pull together. After the announcement that Good Samaritan Hospital would close, residents along the Salem Avenue corridor emerged as tireless advocates for their neighborhood. As we work to find a permanent use for the Good Sam site, we will continue to listen to the concerns of neighborhood residents and do what we can to stabilize these neighborhoods. To that end, the city has committed 19.6 million dollars over the next six years for the continued demolition of blighted residential and commercial properties, exterior repairs for homeowners, and the complete reconstruction of Salem Avenue.

We know that there is still much work to do to rebuild our neighborhoods, particularly in West Dayton. That community has been ground zero for many of our city's hardest challenges, as the legacies of discriminatory policies and practices continue to play out.

Understandably, some residents in West Dayton feel left out and left behind. That is why the city has been supporting numerous efforts to encourage responsible and inclusive development in that community.

One critical project is the redevelopment of Desoto Bass and Hilltop Homes - two large public housing complexes - into mixed-income neighborhoods of opportunity. Greater Dayton Premier Management, Citywide Development, and the City of Dayton have been working closely for several years to lay the groundwork for reinvestment in those communities.

This collaborative was awarded a HUD Choice Planning Grant, and last summer released the Renew Miami Chapel plan that incorporated the feedback of over 500 community stakeholders. We are now in the process of beginning to raise the local matching funds that will make Dayton competitive for a 30 million dollar Choice implementation grant.

The city has also been supportive of efforts to redevelop a large brownfield site that is nearby - that also just happens to be the home of the first airplane factory in the United States.

We are working in partnership with the National Aviation Heritage Area and the National Park Service, who plan to turn the Wright Brothers' factory into a museum. Dayton Metro Library also plans to build its new west-side branch on the site, closely connecting the neighborhood with the new development.

And late last year, a nationally-renowned planning firm spent a week in West Dayton weaving together these plans and several others, including a new riverfront master plan. This work builds on years of thoughtful engagement with West Dayton residents, and will help the city to attract investment into these neighborhoods.

People settled and moved to Dayton in search of opportunity.

Susie Roberts moved to Dayton in 1946 from Montgomery, Alabama. After getting married in her parents' living room, she and her husband picked up and moved north when he was stationed at Wright Patterson Air Force Base. They moved into Desoto Bass Courts, which were built as temporary housing for African-American veterans returning from World War II.

Susie and her husband went on to buy a home on Wisconsin Boulevard through a land contract. Susie raised ten children in that house and watched as the neighborhood around her changed dramatically.

As the Delphi plant closed and vacant houses began to spring up all around her, Susie remained engaged in her neighborhood. She worked with the Montgomery County Land Bank to acquire and stabilize vacant properties and played an active role in the recent Carillon/Edgemont neighborhood planning process. Now 95 years old, Susie remains a pillar of her neighborhood and her children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren are all active advocates for Dayton.

There are countless stories like this in Dayton. Thousands of families moved to Dayton to find opportunity, and they have contributed in innumerable ways to our city since arriving.

54,000 African Americans moved to Dayton to escape the Jim Crow South and seek a better life. Thousands of Appalachian families moved to Dayton as well, looking for stable, good-paying jobs. Immigrants from across Europe made our city their home because they felt they could make a good life here. All of these cultures together have made Dayton unique – and built it into the city that all of us love.

But we know that the kind of opportunity that brought many of these families to Dayton in the past is not as readily available now – and has never been evenly distributed.

When I took office as mayor, it felt like Dayton had just been pushed out of a plane. Dayton was in freefall. We were still dealing with the many impacts of the Great Recession, including widespread unemployment, a decimated real estate market, and extremely limited financial resources. The addiction crisis that gripped Dayton harder than most communities compounded those challenges, requiring an all-hands-on-deck response.

We had to focus on triaging the situation to make sure that our community could survive these shocks – and I am so proud of the work that so many of you did to make sure that we came out of this crisis stronger than before.

But as we begin to feel like our parachute has opened, it's important to survey where we are, how we got here, and how we can make the best, most strategic landing.

To me, that means we must look at how opportunity is distributed throughout our city and our region, and determine what we can do to make sure it is accessible for all of our residents.

We must look unflinchingly at the impact on our communities of color and people living in poverty. For these Daytonians, it may feel like they have been in freefall for years – and they don't have a parachute at all.

The loss of jobs, the growing rates of poverty, the decline in population, the huge wave of foreclosures and the tragedy of blight and abandonment hit our African American communities especially hard. And, these challenges were all compounded by decades of discriminatory policies that left our community segregated and unequal.

We know that no one else is going to come in and save us. We have to confront these challenges - head-on and without flinching.

This morning I am excited to announce a new strategic focus for the city of Dayton on reducing barriers for people living in poverty. Through the remainder of my term, I will focus on working to identify and dismantle systems that keep people trapped in poverty.

The first initiative in line with this new focus is aimed at reducing evictions within the city. According to Princeton University's Eviction Lab, over one in twenty renters in Dayton were evicted in 2016. Evictions are an important issue for addressing poverty at its root, because the

loss of housing can also mean lost jobs, instability for children, and a court record that makes finding new housing difficult.

To understand the root of this issue here in Dayton, I have convened a task force of key stakeholders that will research this issue and make recommendations for how to address it. Members of the task force will include elected officials, representatives from the courts and stakeholders from legal aid and social service nonprofits, as well as organizations representing responsible landlords. I look forward to their findings, and to taking action on this issue.

Another initiative related to reducing barriers for people in poverty comes from a recognition that even relatively small things like a parking violation can have an undue burden for people living in poverty.

Dayton's system for towing currently requires people to make two stops to recover their cars – one downtown to pay their ticket and another to the tow lot to pick up their cars. People living in poverty may not have the flexibility to find a ride to the tow lot from downtown, much less the money to pay the ticket and fines for their tow.

I am committed to ensuring that at a minimum, Daytonians only have to make one stop to retrieve their cars. Additionally, I want to work with the Dayton Police Department to find ways to make sure that we are not unduly taking away people's access to transportation by towing – which may keep them from their jobs.

Finally, I am committed to working with stakeholders from across the community to encourage investment in our neighborhoods and put policies in place to make sure that all residents – including those like Susie Roberts who have been in Dayton for the long haul – benefit from new investment.

With stagnant population and low housing values, attracting investment to our neighborhoods has been challenging. To address this challenge the city is engaging strategically with the new federal Opportunity Zones program to drive investment into neighborhoods. The city manager and staff have pounced on this unique initiative and are working with regional and national experts to determine how we can best position Dayton to benefit from this new program.

Simultaneously, the City Commission and City Manager have started several conversations with leaders from the affordable housing and community development sectors to discuss ways that we can ensure new investment creates inclusive, diverse neighborhoods.

Our city – shaped by our history – still remains too segregated and too unequal. Dayton now has the chance to do what other cities have struggled to do – make sure that development is to the benefit of all of our residents -- in every corner of the city -- by creating more diverse neighborhoods and new economic opportunities.

Barack Obama often spoke about opportunity, both before and after he served as President. In his book *The Audacity of Hope*, he devoted an entire chapter to the subject of Opportunity. And,

in a speech delivered at the College Opportunity Summit in 2014, he reminded us that America “was founded on the idea everybody should have an equal opportunity to succeed.”

Building a city where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed will not be quick and will not be easy. But, regardless of where you live in Dayton – whether you live on the east side of the river or the west side; in Patterson Park or Residence Park; in Linden Heights or Arlington Heights; in Edgemont or Eastmont – we make you this pledge. We are committed to doing what we can to ensure all of our neighbors have the opportunity to take part in Dayton’s resurgence.

I am ready to get to work to meet this commitment. I ask all of you to join me.