

# State of the City | Boston.gov

Thank you, everyone.

To my mother Mary, brother John, and Lorrie: thank you for your love and support. Governor [Charles] Baker; President [Stanley] Rosenberg, Speaker [Robert] DeLeo, members of Congress, the State Legislature, and the Boston City Council, and everyone here in Symphony Hall or watching at home: Good evening.

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[Three years ago](#), you gave me the honor of serving as Mayor of the City I love.

At my inauguration I pledged to listen, to learn, and to lead, because we are in this together. Tonight, I'm proud to say we are still listening, learning, and leading; and because of all our work – together – the state of our City is stronger than it's ever been in our history.

We are stronger not just because of what we've done, [but because of who we are](#). We are a City that believes every single person deserves an equal chance to thrive. And when we stand together, there's nothing we can't achieve. We don't wait for a better future, we create it.

That's the City that made me who I am: a son of immigrants, who needed a second chance, and got to live his dream by serving you, the people of Boston. Everything I do as mayor, and the plan I'll share with you tonight, is to make sure every Bostonian can follow their dreams.

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Look how far we've come together in 3 years.

We added 60,000 jobs and cut unemployment to 2.4%, the lowest on record. We're bringing opportunity to the entire City.

We tackled our housing shortage by building 19,000 homes, a record 7,400 for [low- and middle-income families](#). Rents are stabilizing.

We made the Boston Public Schools the best they've ever been and the best of any city in the country. Last year, [21 more schools reached Level 1 or 2 status](#). High school and college graduation rates are at all-time highs.

We brought violent crime down by 9%, property crime down by 16%, and, just as important, arrests are down 25% since 2014. As I said last year, we make Boston safer not by locking people up but by lifting people up.

Tonight, 1,052 Bostonians who used to live on the streets are in their own homes with the services they need to succeed. [We ended chronic veterans' homelessness](#). And we're [ending all chronic homelessness by 2018](#).

We believe in all of Boston's people.

We made City government's leadership and workforce more reflective of our diversity than it's ever been.

[We added early voting locations](#) across the City and registered more than 30,000 new voters.

We're delivering better City services than ever before, with a state-of-the-art website, a multi-platform 311 system, and a [performance dashboard called CityScore](#).

We're making Boston a [fiber optic city](#). 27,000 families have new internet and cable options in Dorchester, Roxbury, Roslindale, and West Roxbury. The rest of the City is on the way.

[We are America's climate champion](#), with a target date of 2050 for going 100% carbon-neutral.

We've grown together in 3 years.

Our population is up nearly 30,000 people, to a 50-year high.

We advanced 35 million square feet of new living and working space, spanning every neighborhood of our City. Women and men are hard at work building \$6.5 billion worth of it right now, from Brighton to Hyde Park.

We're ranked the [best city for startups](#) and a leader in venture capital success. We brought the startup economy to the neighborhoods, beginning with the Roxbury Innovation Center. We built Boston's first citywide system of small business support, and we're encouraging worker-owned co-ops.

We made Boston a global headquarters City — a world leader in innovation, life sciences, finance, and law. We've also become America's shoe capital, home to New Balance, Converse, Reebok, Puma, and M. Gemi.

We're making sure everyone shares in this success.

We secured Boston's first perfect triple-A bond ratings, and sustained them for 3 years running. This year, we gave Boston homeowners one of the biggest tax cuts in modern memory.

For senior citizens, we upped the water discount to 30%, we got better deals for internet and cable, and we provided more than 700 elderly homeowners with home repairs or new heating systems.

We're replacing half the Boston Fire Department's fleet, and building Boston's first new firehouses in 30 years.

We organized 179 companies to close the gender wage gap and we trained 3,000 women to negotiate their own higher pay.

We renovated 61 parks and playgrounds. And I'm proposing to use \$100 million from the sale of the Winthrop Square Garage downtown to strengthen our neighborhoods. That money will go to revitalizing public housing in East Boston and South Boston, major investments in Franklin Park and Boston Common, and finally completing the original plan for the Emerald Necklace.

Culture in Boston is flourishing.

We completed a spectacular Central Library renovation in the Back Bay. We are now investing \$90 million in neighborhood branch libraries all across the City. And I can announce tonight that we listened to the community, and we are finally bringing library services back to the Chinatown neighborhood.

We lifted restrictions on live music and outdoor dining. We've got more new and diverse restaurants than Boston's ever seen. We lit up City Hall and turned the Plaza into a winter wonderland.

We created the first cultural plan in a generation. We put arts funding in our capital budget. And we helped save the Huntington and Colonial theaters.

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I want to thank the dedicated public employees who make our progress possible.

They are community builders like Aisha Johnson at Inspectional Services, who helps residents and businesses resolve the toughest conflicts.

They are selfless workers like Daniel Ross of the Parks Department. Daniel found a man having a seizure, placed his coat over him, and held him until the ambulance arrived.

They are role models like Francisco Melgar, a street worker who came from El Salvador at the age of 13, and now devotes his life to East Boston's youth.

And they are heroes like Boston Police Officers Richard Cintolo and Matthew Morris, wounded putting their lives on the line to protect residents in East Boston.

They are all here tonight; please join me in saluting them.

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We've made historic progress. And we're just getting started.

Together we've built the foundation. Now we're ready to soar. For the first time in half a century, Boston is a City with a plan. Imagine Boston 2030, a plan drafted by thousands of Bostonians, will shape growth to benefit all our residents for decades to come.

Let's start with jobs. When we pitched Boston as the world's innovation leader, G.E. and many others responded. Our goal is more than new logos in the skyline. It's good jobs and job training for all.

We're developing a high-tech manufacturing sector that provides just that. In robotics, 3-D printing, medical devices, and more, employers are coming, they are growing, they are hiring. And, at our request, they are in our schools, helping young people get ready for those jobs.

We're taking it citywide. We're going to make the Fairmount Line a jobs corridor, with affordable housing, through the heart of our city from Newmarket, to Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, Hyde Park, and Readville.

People talk about bringing back manufacturing. We are doing it, and doing it the right way, with the jobs of the future and the preparation our young people need to build it.

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Boston is a City for everyone. Whatever your age, whatever your income, whatever your dream: you should be able to make a home here.

That's why we set, and are surpassing, our historic housing goals in every income bracket. We're working with residents to identify the right places for growth. Planning in South Boston, Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, and Roxbury will strengthen existing communities and create vibrant new ones.

We're helping people stay in their homes and neighborhoods. We created an [Office of Housing Stability](#). And our Home Center helped more first-time buyers achieve their dreams, and more existing homeowners avoid foreclosure, than ever before.

Moving forward, we are preparing [historic investments in affordable housing](#). Already, we've invested \$100 million. Our new requirements on developers call for another \$45 million from recent project approvals. With backing from Boston's voters, we adopted the [Community Preservation Act](#). I want to take a moment to thank all of you for another \$20 million a year in affordable housing, open space, and historic preservation.

This year we'll advance creative ways to lower costs, from compact units to community land trusts. And we'll file 5 bills at the State House protecting residents from displacement.

We're going to use every tool at our disposal to keep Boston a city of neighborhoods and a city for everyone.

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Getting from good homes to good jobs depends on good transportation. In our dynamic City, traffic is a challenge for drivers, cyclists, and walkers alike.

It's a challenge we're confronting. While people are talking about infrastructure, we're taking action. Already we upgraded Uphams Corner, [broke ground on a redesigned Commonwealth Avenue](#) from Allston to Fenway, and are [completing Central Square in East Boston](#).

We've now secured \$300 million to take it citywide. We are working with residents to transform Rutherford Ave. and Sullivan Square in Charlestown; North Washington St. Bridge in the North End; Melnea Cass Boulevard in Roxbury and the South End; and the Northern Avenue Bridge at Fort Point Channel.

In addition, I can announce a plan to bring cutting-edge traffic-light technology to Boston's busiest streets. We've all been there: you hit one red light, you seem to hit them all. New signals will adapt to traffic in real time and work together to keep it flowing.

In a city on the move, the streets should work for everyone. [Our Vision Zero safety plan](#) aims to end fatalities on our roads. [We are installing protected bike lanes](#) Downtown and in the Back Bay. We're revitalizing crosswalks and lane markings. [We're piloting self-driving cars](#). And I want to thank the Boston City Council for taking the life-saving step of lowering Boston's default speed limit to 25 miles per hour citywide.

The people of Boston also deserve public transit that works. I applaud the Carmen's Union and the governor for an agreement that puts the MBTA on stronger fiscal footing. Now it's time for a comprehensive, fully funded plan to move the T into the 21st century. That means better commuter rail service, including the Fairmount Line. It means smarter bus routes and dependable trains. And it means new connections for neighborhoods like Mattapan to job hubs like Longwood Medical Area in Mission Hill.

Boston and Massachusetts' economy needs this. Let's work together to get it done.

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Public schools are the foundation of equal opportunity. But in Boston, as recently as 3 years ago, students faced steep barriers: not enough pre-kindergarten seats for 4-year-olds; one of the shortest school days in the country; schools built before World War II; and the struggle to get to college and pay for it.

I'm proud to say [we are replacing these barriers with bridges into college and career](#). Today, 725 more children are in high-quality, free pre-kindergarten classrooms. [We extended the school day](#), giving kindergarten through 8th grade students 120 more hours of learning time, or the equivalent of 20 added school days a year. Thank you to the teachers, principals, and parents who made it possible. This year we'll complete the \$73 million [Dearborn STEM Academy](#) in Roxbury. And for Boston Public School graduates, we secured [free tuition](#) at Bunker Hill, Roxbury, and Mass Bay Community Colleges.

We're making great progress. But there's plenty of room for improvement. The gaps that remain come in the shape of race, language, and need. Equity demands bold solutions.

That's why, this week, I will file legislation to finally eliminate the opportunity gap in early education, and, for the first time in Boston's history, offer free, high-quality pre-kindergarten to every single 4-year-old in our City. Our proposal is funded by tourism taxes, already paid in Boston, that produce the annual surplus in the Convention Center Fund. It's only fair that Boston's success benefits all Boston's children.

In addition: in the coming weeks, we will release a 10-year Facilities Plan, [Build BPS](#). That means, tonight, I can announce that [we will invest \\$1 billion in Boston's school buildings](#). We will create high-quality 21st-century classrooms for every student, connected to every neighborhood, college, and workplace in our City.

Boston is entering a new era of school investment. So, once again, I urge everyone to come together for our students. We are committed to working with our partners on Beacon Hill to fix education aid and charter school funding. But we need district and charter schools to learn from each other, not turn on each other. And we need everyone to understand that better buildings and grade configurations means changing the status quo. We all need to trust in our shared values. If we do, we can solve urban education in Boston and for America.

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I tell students: the path to your dreams isn't a straight line. And you don't walk it by yourself.

Everyone struggles and needs help. The opioid crisis brings this home. I want to thank the Legislature and the Governor for [passing four pieces of legislation](#), last session, aimed at saving lives.

Addiction is a cunning and baffling disease. But recovery begins with a simple plea for help. That's why we turned our [311 system into a 24-hour recovery hotline](#), so we're always ready to answer that call. Tonight I have a message for everyone watching: if you or your loved one has a problem with drugs or alcohol in the City of Boston, call 311 right now. We are here to help. Don't suffer alone.

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I ask everyone to reach out and be there for your neighbors. The bonds we forge make our City stronger.

That's why we're one of the safest big cities in the country and getting safer every year. I want to thank the young people, the Boston police officers, the clergy, the parents and grandparents, the street workers, the job trainers, the foundations and nonprofits — for your courageous and relentless relationship-building.

Together we've forged the most comprehensive and collaborative [public safety strategy](#) in the history of our City. Last year, Boston Police officers took 777 guns off the street and shootings were down by 6%.

But the work is far from over. We had 45 homicides in our City last year. That's unacceptable. One is too many. And zero is our goal. To get there we have to keep digging up the roots of violence and sowing the seeds of opportunity.

In [Operation Exit](#) and [Professional Pathways](#), we're helping young people get the hope, the skills, and the jobs they need to leave the streets behind.

We brought back the [Boston Police Cadet program](#). Our first class is the [most diverse ever](#), with 70% people of color, 33% women, and 100% Boston residents. They are here with us tonight.

Now I can announce another vital step: we have created [Neighborhood Trauma Teams](#) in Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, East Boston, and Mattapan. In the aftermath of violence, health centers, hospitals, and community groups will coordinate immediate response and sustained recovery for all those affected. Together we'll break the cycle of suffering and violence and bring healing to our City.

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My plan is clear. It's:

- good jobs in every neighborhood
- massive investments in affordable housing and open space
- infrastructure upgrades to fix traffic
- free high-quality pre-kindergarten for all
- \$1 billion for new schools, and
- doubling down on community-driven public safety.

In other words: a city with its values written into its DNA; a city that lifts everyone as it rises; and a city with a future even greater than our past.

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I got a glimpse of that future in the [Town Hall forum on race](#) we held in November.

The conversations were not easy. Healing never is. But two young Bostonians named Kendra [Gerald] and Dante [Omorogbe] lifted our hearts. They spoke with honesty and with hope. In them, I saw and felt our City's core strength. They are here and I'd like to thank them.

They are not alone. Across our City, young people just starting out are breaking down barriers and lifting others as they rise.

The fact is: we don't get far by ourselves. But together we can move mountains. In divided times, it's never been more true. The power of our values is real. What we're achieving in Boston is said to be impossible nationally:

- free community college tuition
- expanding public housing
- reducing incarceration
- going carbon neutral
- great district schools and great charter schools, and
- bringing back corporate headquarters and manufacturing jobs.

We're fighters in Boston. We don't know the word "impossible." But we didn't win these victories by fighting against each other. We won them by fighting for each other. Shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand.

Forging relationships, following through, and never quitting. Knowing that, if we share the same values, we will always have common ground to stand on — and to build on.

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Tomorrow I travel to the [U.S. Conference of Mayors](#).

I will work with my fellow mayors to move our cities forward and tackle America's hardest challenges. Cities are the engines of opportunity, drivers of innovation, and safety nets for the vulnerable. Cities are also gateways for new Americans — [like my mother and father](#) and 28% of Bostonians today. We don't just welcome immigrants in Boston, [we help them thrive](#). And we [won't retreat an inch](#).

In a time of uncertainty, we will step forward with confidence in our values. With trust in government at an all-time low, we prove that government can work for all the people. At a time when cities must lead, Boston is the leader of cities.

Whatever happens nationally, I will fight for our values. I will fight for our families. I will fight for our seniors and our children, for our veterans, our immigrants, and those with disabilities. I will fight for good jobs, public schools, and affordable housing, for racial justice and equal rights. And I will never stop fighting for recovery.

We are in this together, and we will fight every day for each other, for Boston, and for all of its people. God Bless You. God Bless the City of Boston. God Bless the United States of America.