Good morning and welcome.  
  
I would like to take this opportunity to thank ArtsQuest, the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, all the SPONSORS, my department heads, members of City Council, and the entire audience for attending this breakfast this morning.  
  
I am pleased to announce that the state of our city is strong, our people are engaged, as we approach the final years of this decade, with a sense of accomplishment and enthusiasm for this great city we call home.  
  
The efforts of my administration during the last four years, have yielded real results for our city.  
  
We’ve stabilized the City’s finances, made critical investments in equipment, and took the time to plan for our future.  
  
We have formed partnerships with Lehigh University, St. Luke’s University Health Network, Moravian College, Lehigh Valley Health Network, Artsquest, the Chamber, Northampton Community College and the Bethlehem Area School District, to bring new and vital services to Bethlehem so we can improve the quality of life of our residents.   
  
The City could not be more appreciative of their contributions.  
  
But now is not the time to sit back and rest. Over the next four years, I will continue to strive for greater improvement.  We cannot be satisfied with what we have done so far, we should learn from and build upon our successes.  
  
2017 was a busy year, with the completion of several major infrastructure projects.  We saw the opening of the Lynn Avenue, High Street and Fahy Bridges, and the replacement of the pedestrian bridge over the Monocacy Creek.  
  
Our public works department, paved 17 lane miles of streets, cut 25 miles of vegetation, replaced 250 street signs, collected over 30,000 cubic yards of leaves, and filled 8,000 potholes.   Not too bad for one year.  
  
The revitalization of the Southside, continues with progress on the Greenway Commons Development, the recent announcement that Grille 3501 will be joining tenants St. Luke’s and Lehigh University, at the Gateway at Greenway Park at Third and New Streets.  
  
And the opening of a 17 million dollar parking garage at New Street and Graham Place, includes the recent installation of electric charging stations both there and at the North Street garage.  
  
On the north side, major progress was made on the Armory Development project, and we cut the ribbon on a $90 million expansion at Lehigh Valley Health Network – Muhlenberg, and saw the dedication of the brand new Nitschmann Middle School.  
  
But just as Bethlehem’s infrastructure has itself undergone tremendous changes throughout its history, the way in which a city serves its constituents, needs to change and evolve over time.  
  
The city will be implementing changes in a variety of ways, the first of which is through embracing new technologies.  We have seen the tremendous impact technology has had in all aspects of life.  
  
From education to healthcare, and every field in between, we know the impact technology, data and information has on us.  For some time, the public sector was not viewed as a true proponent or leader in the technology field, but we see that changing.    
  
In government, technology cannot  - and should not - remove personal interaction, but it can enhance outcomes, break down traditional silos in and out of city hall, engage constituents, and improve efficiencies.  
  
Over the past year, we’ve developed an app for use on tablets by our inspectors in the field to assess blighted properties. Once populated, the information is relayed to our upgraded GIS system, allowing us to identify areas of blight in the city.  
  
GIS is being used by our public works department to improve the collection and transfer of information, regarding our road conditions, and we’ve implemented a state of the art, web based reporting system, to manage 8,000 new street lights purchased and installed throughout the city.  
  
Our water and sewer department, have begun using technology that allows for remote meter reading, and is procuring new software for management of all operations via tablets that interface with the department’s database.  
  
The possibilities for using technology in managing the city are far greater.  We want our constituents to be able to pay bills, get permits, and register complaints or concerns to us remotely.  So over the next four years we will upgrade our technology.  
  
We will increase our online presence to make the city more user friendly and informative. We will integrate technology into our streets maintenance program via AVL fleet tracking, and use available technologies in the recycling industry, to reduce carbon emissions, something our Climate Action Working Group is already striving toward.  
  
As the 911 consolidation with Northampton County moves forward, we are exploring the implementation of a 311-type system, either through an app or through a dedicated phone number, at the existing comm center.  
  
It is important that our residents are able to obtain local assistance on important concerns, without having to call a county emergency number.  
  
Most importantly, we will provide an open data portal to allow residents, business owners, and visitors, to view the information those inside city hall can see but others traditionally could not. While still in its infancy, the open data portal will be a dashboard of city operations, so constituents can view information relevant to them. The citizens of Bethlehem deserve to know the numbers and data behind their tax dollars.  
  
*Henry Ford allegedly once said, “The only thing worse than training your employees and having them leave is not training them and having them stay.”*  
  
I have always been a strong advocate of staff development, but as government is being viewed more and more as a service industry, we need a team of specialists who are ready to assist constituents across all departments.  
  
The City will invest in the professional development of its staff, by conducting monthly seminars in technology upgrades and software, and by encouraging trainings, certifications, and accreditations in their field.  
  
These investments are vital to helping the city find and retain talented and positive employees.  Study after study shows, that professional development increases the engagement, productivity and longevity of an employee.

It is far more expensive to hire a new employee than to invest in a current one.  The combination of new technologies and a talented workforce, will result in getting our constituents the help they need in the least amount of time possible.  
  
We will utilize customer satisfaction surveys, and other methods of feedback, to determine what we do well, and what we could do better.  
  
We will evaluate how information is delivered to residents.  Is some information better suited to be relayed via email, via traditional mail, or posted on our website or social media pages?  And when developing city policies, we will focus on the outcome we are trying to achieve, rather than focusing solely on the process.  
  
At the core of these improvements and efforts, is the desire to support the health of our community and our residents at all stages of their lives. Bethlehem is a city that has something to offer everyone, no matter their age, income, or interests.  Our recreation facilities, neighborhoods and downtowns, all contribute to the vibrancy of Bethlehem.  
  
My first term was dedicated to improving the city’s finances so we could make the vital investments necessary to ensure the health of our neighborhoods. We cut expenses by over $15 million over four years.  
  
This major accomplishment, along with the increase in the city’s bond rating from BBB to A+ with a stable outlook, the unassigned fund balance of $12.5 million, and the savings of $3,000,000 through the advanced refunding of two bonds, allows us, to focus on programs and initiatives essential to healthy communities.   
  
This past year, we completed a comprehensive parks and pools study, which examined the recreational assets of our city, and made recommendations as how we can best capitalize on them.  
  
As I recently announced, the City has a Monocacy Park Master Plan that will include major renovations to the Memorial Pool Complex. The proposed renovations will result in the closing of Memorial Pool for the 2018 and 2019 seasons.  These renovations, are necessary to once again make Memorial Pool, a flagship recreation area that is functional, safe and enjoyable for our residents.  
  
Residents can also look forward to a redesign of the Rose Garden this year, as a result of a grant awarded by the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation. Other improvements to our recreation facilities will follow as the recommendations from the study are phased in over time.  
  
The city continues to become more accessible to visitors and residents through our wayfinding project, which saw the installation of over 30 new signs to date, with another 170 slated to be installed at our gateways, downtowns and along our streets in the near future.  
  
Phase 4 of the Greenway has been completed, with Phase 5 getting underway this year bringing us closer than ever before, to connecting to the Hellertown/Lower Saucon Rail Trail.  
  
To further create a city that values recreation, tourism and leisure, along with supporting alternative transportation, my administration will pursue the creation of a complete streets policy, that will integrate pedestrian safety, bike lane improvements and vehicular safety throughout the city.  
  
The people that choose to live in Bethlehem, deserve to maximize the investment they’ve made in our city.  Nothing is more frustrating for a resident, than to look out their widow at a dilapidated, run down structure, that is affecting the value of their property.  I am committed to ensuring the stability of our neighborhoods that could otherwise be undone by a few irresponsible property owners.

Our comprehensive blight inventory study will be completed this April, which will propose strategies and tactics we can employ to eliminate neighborhood blight and spur redevelopment. In conjunction with these efforts, are the ongoing projects, which will enhance and improve

 all of our neighborhoods.  
  
Targeted Neighborhood Improvement Programs, like Northside 2027, and a commitment to upgrading and preserving our housing stock, through our rehabilitation and loan programs, will aid our citizens in keeping their blocks and homes inviting and safe.   
  
In 2017, Bethlehem partnered with Northampton County in successfully applying for a $2.2 million dollar grant from HUD, targeted at eliminating lead from homes in the city.  
  
This is a critical program, as 59% of our housing stock, was constructed prior to the elimination of lead paint in 1978, and the effects of lead are serious and long lasting.  
  
Leading this effort for the city will be our Health Department, which became accredited through the Public Health Accreditation Board in March of this past year. The accreditation process has led to many improvements that will ultimately have a positive impact on the health and well-being of the Bethlehem community, and we are proud of this designation.  
  
With 90% of the nation’s over-65 population indicating they want to remain in their homes as long as they possibly can, it is important that we implement programs and policies that will support our older population.  
  
Often, our older residents need help with home maintenance, errands and other chores.  The city currently supports senior transportation, caregiving and housing with HUD funds, but we are striving to do more by becoming a designated Age Friendly Community. This program examines the social, economic and environmental factors, that impact the well-being of our older adults, prior to implementing relevant policies.  
  
The state of Bethlehem’s economy is strong and diverse. Companies large and small are choosing to invest in Bethlehem (and are doing so for a variety of reasons) but when it is all said and done…they believe that locating here, gives them the best opportunity to succeed and grow.  
  
It is no secret that one of the greatest challenges in our City’s history, the former Bethlehem Steel property, continues to transition from opportunity to capitalization.  We have seen exciting new projects announced and completed over the past year, including: manufacturing companies Vastex International and Alpla, the 1 million sq. ft. Majestic Realty building, the Candlewood Suites hotel, and the Fresenius Kidney Care Southside Dialysis Center.  
  
With these additions, the redevelopment of the old steel land has resulted in 9,000 jobs and $1.5 billion dollars in total investment to date.  Bethlehem has come very far from the days, where we were rightfully worried about the financial future of Bethlehem without Bethlehem Steel. These achievements, speak to our optimism, our hard work and our partnerships.  
  
While development of these brownfield sites continue to overcome their own set of challenges, it is the creative renovation of existing, often blighted structures in our City, that continue to be a hallmark of development projects in Bethlehem.  
  
A 30,000 sq. ft. brick building located at 315 Columbia St., is currently under renovation and will become known as The Factory.  Richard Thompson, who is the former CEO of Meow Mix and Freshpet, is spearheading the project that will be a high-tech research and development accelerator, for companies in the food and beverage industry.  The Factory will take meaningful equity positions in these companies, and work with their teams to innovate and scale.  
  
It’s exciting when entrepreneurs and innovators apply their skills towards adaptive reuse, which will breathe new life into the existing structure.  
  
Bethlehem is committed to supporting entrepreneurs and startup companies with innovative new products primed for commercialization. This is done primarily through the Southside Bethlehem Keystone Innovation Zone, which provides essential seed funding to fledgling startup companies.  
  
Just last year, the KIZ invested $519,000 in KIZ Companies; which employ 67 people, created 20 new jobs, and leveraged an additional $1.8 million in funding for 2017.  
  
$7.68 million has been invested in KIZ Companies since the inception of the program in 2004, which has led to an overall impact of 449 jobs created, 258 patents filed, and $70 million in additional funding leveraged.  
We have seen this model succeed time and time again, and are looking forward to the next great company that launches, grows, and remains invested here in Bethlehem.  We are excited to continue investing in and promoting a culture of innovation and new ways of thinking.  
  
One of our KIZ companies, U-B-Me, is here this morning, with their platform that can connect people in the same location, and lead to new, interactive communication.  We hope you’ll provide us live feedback on the state of our City, through their platform, by following the instructions on the flyer at your table.  
  
*All of this is happening in Bethlehem.*  
  
We are constantly striving to support entertainment, shopping and dining in our two downtowns so that Bethlehem remains both a destination for visitors, and a place people are proud to call home.  
  
In 2017, as our retail recruitment study of our downtowns was completed, we hired a dedicated business development and retention specialist, to implement these findings, and offer support to our existing business owners.  
  
We have completed an inventory of all available retail space in the central business districts, and we are identifying small businesses in communities outside of the Lehigh Valley, that are looking to expand to Bethlehem and fit well with our demographics.  
  
With those key elements in place, we are able tell Bethlehem’s story and highlight assets that make our community the right place in which to start and expand a business.  
  
Building off of our recent SEO audit of city related websites, we will be working in cooperation with our key partners, to develop an effective digital marketing strategy, that will elevate the online presence of our community. Digital marketing strategies are essential to our ability to attract and retain businesses, customers and visitors alike.  
To that end, we have committed to providing training this year to our small businesses, on creating or enhancing their online presence in this age of online shopping and omni-channel marketing.  All of these efforts, are designed to maintain the health and vibrancy of the downtowns.   
  
We will continue to offer financial incentives, where appropriate, to developers, small business owners, and residents, while ensuring accountability for our tax dollars through the newly passed Financial Accountability Incentive Reporting (FAIR) ordinance.  
  
A city cannot grow, attract families, businesses and millions of visitors, unless it is viewed as safe. To that end I have made it my utmost priority, to continue to make Bethlehem one of the safest Third Class Cities in the Commonwealth.  
  
As mentioned in my budget address, multiple federal grants were obtained to allow the fire department to replace all Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), equip our police cars with dash cameras and allow our officers to be fitted with body cameras later this year.  
  
EMS is in the first year of a multi-year plan to replace aging Automatic Electronic Defibrillators (AED’s) in Police and Fire vehicles. And while we regret the need for it, we are in the process of having each member of EMS fitted for soft body armor and anticipate it being in use by April.  
  
As Bethlehem hosts several major festivals and events each year, the fire department was able to put a Polaris UTV into service for use at Musikfest, Celticfest, Runner’s World and other events and races within the City, keeping these events well protected.  
  
We are implementing a replacement program for large fire department apparatus, through the capital budget, with three vehicles scheduled for replacement in 2019 and one in 2021.  
  
This will allow the Department to minimize downtime when a vehicle is out of service, and also allow for a new vehicle to come into service every other year going forward.  
  
The Police and Health Bureau launched the BPAIR Program, (Bethlehem Police Assisting in Recovery), where a drug addicted individual can contact the police department for assistance, be assessed, and have a treatment facility located for them, without fear of prosecution.  
  
To further combat the opioid crisis, our police and firefighters, in coordination with our EMS, have been trained in the use of Naloxone, which has saved over 100 lives since its introduction to the city.  
  
In addition, the City will soon open a new substation in the New Street Garage, jointly managed by Lehigh University Police and City of Bethlehem Police.  
  
I want to emphasize how it is our ability to work together with City Council that has helped the City to prosper and to move forward. Much has been accomplished during my first term, but there is much more to do and many more goals to achieve. I rely on our tremendous community partnerships, and our outstanding residents to help with these goals.  
  
I will continue with my Open Door Policy, where anyone can come to my office the second Monday of each month to discuss their concerns. I will continue to be out in the community conducting my Dare to Care community walks, and speaking before community organizations.  
  
I again would like to thank all of you for taking time this morning to hear about the City of Bethlehem.