*The City of Fargo's 2018 'State of the Cities' Address - 01.11.2018*

2017 was a significant year for Fargo, highlighted by its population continuing an upward trajectory, its people working to advance the goal of being a welcoming, embracing community and its economic base being strengthened and diversified. The state of the city is strong. In this era of growth and opportunity, the City of Fargo team is proud to showcase the innovative, efficient, responsive and strategic successes of this year, along with the work in progress, to help build an even better tomorrow for Fargo.

**Innovative**   
In 2017, Fargo signed wastewater agreements with West Fargo and Horace. City Commissioner Tony Gehrig’s support of utility regionalization efforts have been appreciated. Fargo’s Wastewater Utility Department now has agreements with thirteen different cities, subdivisions and sewer districts to treat wastewater.

The Fargo Police Department held several “Unity” events throughout the year to enhance interactions with area youth. A music video was produced to highlight the Community Trust Officers and students from Jefferson Elementary and Fargo South, in helping to promote this mission.

Fargo was recently named the first place winner of the Georgetown University Energy Prize nationwide competition that evaluated the way in which American cities consume energy. Area youth, utility companies, citizens, private industry and NDSU researchers all worked collaboratively to win this $5 million prize.

The transit department, MATBUS, was recognized by Busline Magazine, for being an industry leader in implementing new technology to enhance the ability of people with disabilities in mobility devices to utilize the fixed route service more independently.

The Engineering Department, along with the City Attorney’s Office, worked to author an agreement which will allow free WiFi to the public in certain areas of the city, starting with Downtown.

The Department of Planning and Development completed substantial work in bringing to fruition the Roberts Common Parking Facility in downtown Fargo. RoCo (Row-cooh), one of the first public-private partnerships in downtown, was officially opened by Mayor Mahoney and City Commissioner Tony Grindberg in June.

The team in Human Resources continues to develop a robust training program for all City employees, with every employee taking part in diversity training this year.

An entirely new City website was launched in mid-2017. The site was completely reorganized and redesigned to make it easier to navigate for residents, business owners and visitors.

**Efficient**   
The City recently completed phase one of the former landfill reclamation project, which will ultimately provide Fargo with an additional 25 years of landfill space for the future. Recycling will also play a vital role in extending the life of the landfill. The introduction of ALL in ONE Recycling has been received incredibly well, with nearly 90 percent of residents (or 23,000 individual homes) electing to take part in the program.

Substantial cost savings were realized when the City elected to change its employee’s health insurance provider, beginning on January first of 2018. The new contract with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Dakota will save the City’s general fund $2.6 million dollars over the course of 2018.

Significant reorganizations have occurred in the Engineering, Planning and Utilities departments to grant authority to mid-level managers in making operating decisions. This will help to maximize efficiencies, further advance customer service initiatives and provide timely responses.

At the request of citizens, Public Works staff members evaluated and identified a viable solution to the beet juice additive that had been used on city streets. Beginning in 2017, a replacement product, which is clear in color and has no odor, has been implemented.

Speaking of roads, the City completed a major roadway and interstate ramp improvement project in 2017 along the 32nd Avenue South corridor by partnering with the North Dakota D-O-T. It also collaborated with West Fargo on the 12th Avenue North project. In 2018, major ventures will include improvements to University Drive South, 10th Street North, Roberts Street, 4th Street South and 13th Avenue South.

**Responsive**   
Inspections team members have created an online portal for viewing construction projects currently being reviewed to provide real-time information to a variety of stakeholders and the public. Inspection is also redoubling its efforts to focus on dilapidated buildings in the city.

Several departments worked together on the site plan reviews, inspections and permitting for the new $500 million Sanford Medical Center in southwest Fargo. The facility is a fantastic addition to the entire metro community and the grand opening was especially memorable, with Fergie, Lionel Ritchie and North Dakota’s own Carson Wentz on hand to officially open the medical center.

In 2017, attendance numbers at the FARGODOME are estimated to have approached 540,000 people (which substantially exceeds its goals). The NDSU Bison Football playoff games surely helped the bottom line! Speaking of the Herd…congratulations to the players, coaches and fans on winning that beautiful sixth FCS trophy last weekend!

The vital work of the Mayors’ Blue Ribbon Commission on Addiction continues. Aided by the professionals in Fargo Cass Public Health, all middle and high schools in Cass County now have Narcan nasal spray as part of the preventive community-wide response to the opioid crisis. All Fargo Police officers and fire fighters have been trained on administering Narcan, and have a supply in each of their cars and trucks.

The Fargo Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, a partnership between the City and Gate City Bank, provided a $2 million low-interest loan program to revitalize and rehabilitate older homes in Fargo.

The City’s outdoor warning siren upgrade has been completed, and an additional siren added on the north side of Fargo, bringing the total of outdoor warning sirens to 37.

The Fargo Fire Department has developed and begun to offer a free CPR class for local businesses to educate their employees on the proper way to deliver this vital life-saving procedure.

**Strategic**   
Work is rapidly continuing on Fargo’s new City Hall in downtown Fargo, with completion expected in the third quarter of 2018. The new City Hall facility features 150,000 square feet of space for twelve different City divisions, and was designed to maximize innovation, while also being efficient.

With the completion of the new City Hall (and the demolition of the current structure) on the horizon for this year, discussions on the design of the “City Plaza” green space to the south of the new facility will be undertaken this year, in addition to a comprehensive look at the future of the Fargo Civic Center and its potential repurposing into a performing arts arena.

As Fargo works diligently in 2018 to complete its in-town flood protection efforts, the FM Area Diversion Project continues to be a top priority for the City and its residents. The task force, established jointly by North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum and Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton, was vitally important in bringing the various parties to the table in an effort of cooperation and problem-solving. City Commissioner John Strand served on the task force and effectively represented Fargo during its discussions. City leaders are encouraged by the recommendations of the task force, and are optimistic that construction on the project will resume this year.

The Police Department recently moved a portion of its operations into the Border States Electric building on 25th Street, which will eventually become the new headquarters for the Fargo Police Department. Retrofitting this existing structure will cost far less than building a new structure, while also providing a facility capable of future expansion.

The Fargo Public Library system continues to provide high demand events and activities to the community, with a record 26,000 people attending Library events in 2017. It will now begin implementing its new strategic goals and actions plans to ensure its collections and services are aligned with the needs and desires of the community.

Team Fargo is looking at additional technology additions in 2018 to help its residents, such as allowing citizens to pay their utility bills or parking tickets by text, and also evaluating the feasibility of mobile ticketing when riding MATBUS.

Fargo adopted its first Public Arts Master Plan in 2017. This is an inaugural major planning effort to communicate the goals and visions for all types of art in public spaces within the city. Additionally, the Planning and Development Department led a comprehensive downtown master plan, called Downtown InFocus, to its adoption by the City Commission in December.

The $120 million expansion to Fargo’s Water Treatment Plant, which will increase capacity by another 15 million gallons per day, is over 80 percent complete and scheduled for full operation in 2018.

The Wastewater Department recently secured a low interest state loan to begin construction of an expansion of the treatment plant. The expansion will double the capacity of the facility and allow it to serve a regional population of 270,000 people.

Of behalf of the Board of Fargo City Commissioners, thank you to this community—to the people, civic organizations, businesses and partners---who make the Fargo-Moorhead metro the nation’s best place to live, raise a family and operate a business. Together, let’s continue the collective work of being Far More!