Good evening everyone.

What is the state of our City?

This evening I will give you a snapshot of our City today and a vision for tomorrow.

When I stood in front of you a year ago, I promised to professionalize city services, build a 21st Century Economy and strengthen our neighborhoods.  Tonight, we have the chance to offer a comparison between promise and performance, what we talked about in 2017 and how that played out over the past 12 months.

Make no mistake - Ideas and goals can take years to materialize. But regardless of the challenges we face, we stride into the new year with credible and achievable objectives, not shallow promises.  The goals I set forth tonight become the target for next year's State of the City address; a constant eye toward the future is a powerful reminder of the work that always lies ahead.

I say at the outset, however:  I am optimistic. Our City is in the midst of a historic transformation that is already taking shape, and will continue to emerge during the foreseeable future.

Recent US Census estimates say our population is 53,157.  Yes, we are a growing city, as more and more hard-working people realize the value and opportunities that derive from living in Revere.   And the data tells that story:

* In 2017, the city issued just over 1,000 Building permits for projects ranging from small home improvements and backyard decks to new home construction;
* another 210 permits were issued for commercial construction, everything from small remodeling jobs to hotels and multi-million dollar mixed-use projects.

All told, these permits generated nearly a million and a half dollars in revenue for our city.

A few more numbers:

* The average assessed value of a single family home in Revere for the current fiscal year is over $343,000, and with real estate values rising, we expect this will continue to increase.
* Our City's bond rating - judged by both Moody’s and Standard and Poor - is of high quality, with low credit risk, and a very positive outlook for the future.

So what does all this mean?

Revere is strong place to invest, both for families looking for a home and for businesses eyeing growth and a stable environment. When people and businesses invest in our city, we evolve into a stronger community, a community where people strive every day to create a city that fulfills its potential.

So where else can we see our City’s potential?  Our schools.

Nearly 8,000 students are enrolled in Revere Public Schools, an increase of 14 percent in the last five years. Just under 2,000 students are enrolled at Revere High School.

While teaching at any level - in any classroom - imposes demands on faculty, teaching in Revere presents tasks that reflect the City’s expansive demographic character.

Despite these demands, we are graduating highly-educated students prepared to move on to the nation's top colleges and universities.

Seventy-two percent of the Revere High School Class of 2017 went on to higher education. The Class of 2017 sent graduates to esteemed colleges and universities such as Boston College, Boston University, Bucknell, Hamilton, Holy Cross, the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Boston, Lowell, and Dartmouth.  Over the last several years, Revere High grads have populated the campuses at MIT, Harvard, Penn, Brown, Princeton, Georgetown and Wellesley.

The caliber of our students speaks directly to the expertise of our school administration and faculty.

And there is more to that picture.  At the same time we are advancing students to elite colleges, our public schools are creating a safe and inclusive environment for everyone. With dedication and enthusiasm our teachers are laying the groundwork for students from every background to succeed.

That, after all, is the story of this nation: the United States has always been a destination for those who arrive here seeking freedom and opportunity; once here, they have the chance to fulfill their personal aspirations.  Our teachers are leaders in this mission.

Let me give you one example: Hatice Ngdelioglu

Mrs. N teaches ninth- and tenth-grade math to English learners at Revere High.

She was born in a small town in Turkey where education was not a priority.

As she tells her story, it was expected of her to finish elementary school, find a husband, and then stay home.  But she had bigger plans.

Encouraged by teachers who guided her and advocated for her, Mrs. N became the first in her family to graduate college, and she came to the United States to build her own future. And now she, as a teacher, is guiding and advocating for her own students to reach their full potential.

The December newsletter of Education First—a national organization devoted to improving education—featured Mrs. N as an example of teacher leadership. In Revere, teachers are intrinsically involved in policy decisions that will ultimately shape classroom interaction—for who has a greater awareness of classroom dynamics than the classroom teacher?

In the Education First article, Mrs. N states and exemplifies the fundamental creed of all teachers:

*“What we are doing is important," she says.  "I am a teacher because I care deeply about my students.”*

Mrs. N represents all of our teachers, and they all deserve our applause.

While education is a substantial and vital aspect of municipal government, the people of our city expect service in so many different areas. Their investment in our city indicates a growing confidence.  And developing confidence in our city is a responsibility all of us in this room share.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said:

*Confidence... thrives on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of obligations, on faithful protection and on unselfish performance. Without them it cannot live.*

As I contemplated this 2018 State of the City address, I tested myself against the standard set out in President Roosevelt’s observation:  what have I done to help cultivate confidence in the City of Revere?

A year ago:

* I promised an approach to governing that encourages responsible development, the kind that will spur job growth and deliver community amenities for everyone.
* I promised an open, accessible government that uses technology to efficiently respond to resident needs.
* I promised economic good sense, to operate a government that maximizes the benefit of the sacrifice everyone makes in the form of taxes.

So, where are we today when measured against the visions we had a year ago?

2017 marked major accomplishments in Revere as we strive to connect resident's needs with municipal services.

In 2017 we launched the city’s 311 Constituent Services system, a user-friendly yet comprehensive department that makes it easy for residents to call, text, tweet or email City staff to address any questions or issues in the City. This makes every resident a watchdog and facilitates the response to the issues that crop up every day, whether it is a pothole, a broken street sign or an uncollected trash barrel.

Since July the 311 team has fielded over 2200 requests for service.

Ninety-two percent of the work orders generated by 311 were completed in a timely fashion.

So what is our goal going forward?

More requests from residents...and of course more work orders, but most important faster completion of the work.

In 2017 we dug into the three year backlog of nearly 150 sidewalk repairs, spending a quarter-million dollars and establishing an aggressive schedule to eliminate this backlog.  And once the weather clears, our efforts will begin again.

We created a Human Resources department at City Hall to bring consistency to our hiring practices. Now, employment opportunities are publicly posted and include clear job descriptions that allow us to tap our local talent pool and attract the most qualified residents to jobs right here in their home town.

We have worked hard to improve services and programming for our veterans. These include an increased availability of housing reserved for veterans.  Moreover, our Veterans Services Department has started connecting local businesses to our veterans seeking employment. And thanks to a new program that accepts and refurbishes electronic wheelchairs - we have been able to provide the blessing of mobility to five veterans who made extraordinary sacrifices in their service to our country.

It is no secret that development in our City is booming.

The latest phase of Waterfront Square opened in 2017 and is already proving to be a premier destination for new residents. The Beach House on Revere Beach Boulevard is nearing completion, and progress continues at the former Shaw’s site.

These developments signal a new standard of living along Revere Beach with amenities like luxurious roof decks, pet sitting, and modern, fully-equipped fitness centers.

At least two new hotels looking out on Revere Beach are in the early stages of construction. During the planning stages of these projects, developers agreed to our demands that these hotels include amenities such as restaurants, coffee shops and function space where all of our residents can enjoy a different kind of day at the beach.

Two more hotels have been permitted in our city, promising tax revenue and employment opportunities.

And under a new District Improvement Financing (DIF) proposal that will be presented to the City Council, a portion of additional tax revenue that these new developments produce will be committed to further improvements and upgrades to the Revere Beach area. As that area prospers, so, too, will all areas of our City.

And thanks to the voters of this city, last year we made good on the promise to provide tax relief to homeowners and adopted a 10 per cent residential tax exemption for homes owned and occupied by qualified senior citizens.

Our next goal: a 10 percent residential tax exemption for all owner-occupied homes.

In 2017 the NECCO property was sold to Atlantic Management and re-zoned by the city - allowing this site to be the home to 21st century industries such as robotics, biotech and advanced manufacturing.

The goals of 2017 are becoming reality in 2018.

This month, electronic permitting will go live. Residents and business owners will be able to apply for a building permit, schedule an inspection or obtain a permit for bulk trash pickup online.

Later this year, cable subscribers in Revere, for the first time, will have a choice in selecting a cable provider as we recently signed a contract with RCN and are in the process of finalizing a new contract with Comcast.

Revere is fast becoming a place where families want to settle.  This means providing recreational spaces and activities for all ages.  By the end of this calendar year, we will have reconstructed four playgrounds, renovated multiple basketball courts, and expanded the availability and accessibility to recreational areas all across the city.

Check out the Recreation Department website and you’ll see an array of programs such as pre-school playtime, cooking classes, a new Teen Center that opened in December, Open Gym programs, video game nights, baseball camps, year round basketball programs, flag football— activities that every age bracket will enjoy.

Good government means not only providing a world class education or fun amenities for its people, it means protecting them, too.

And so public safety, of course, is a priority for any government.

I have worked diligently with new leadership in the police and fire departments to advance public safety measures that protect our residents.

In the police department, we’ve worked to properly manage employee time off, instituting practices that have allowed for more walking routes on Broadway and Shirley Ave. The department will graduate 4 new recruits from the police academy in June and will have 8 more entering the academy in the next few months. A greater emphasis on training and the movement towards a proactive, problem solving police department has resulted in a morale shift inside the department and safer neighborhoods outside.

In the fire department, we’ve addressed staffing shortages and nearly cut in half the number of times a piece of fire apparatus was out of commission due to staffing - going from 739 times in 2014 to 380 in 2017. A federal grant helped us hire four new firefighters in fiscal year 2018 and we will seek another grant next year as we aim to man all apparatus at all times.

Sometimes, it’s easy to take for granted the vital role of our public safety personnel.

Call, and they arrive.

But it’s not always that simple.

I want to introduce to you to Senior Deputy Chief James Cullen, Fire Captain Carl Holmberg, Captain Guy Landry, the crews from Ladder 1 and 2, firefighters Peter McLaughlin, Lawrence Floyd, Michael DiGiovanni and James Nadworny.

Several weeks ago, Ladder 1 was alerted to a medical emergency aboard an oil tanker at the Irving docks after a ship crew member suffered a cardiac arrest. Think of that for a second:  how many cities the size of Revere are likely to receive an emergency call from an oil tanker in port in their city?

Ladder 1 arrived and boarded the ship using a ground ladder and assumed the CPR efforts that the ship’s crew had started.   Advanced Life Support teams arrived.

Removing the victim from the ship was no easy task: technical rescue rope skills were necessary to set up a tag line to maneuver a stretcher that was moved by an onboard crane over the water and onto the dock, from where the victim was whisked to the hospital.

All in a days work?  In a fundamental way, yes—and that’s what makes it so impressive.

This was one instance, but a glowing example of how municipal government works for its people.  But understand:   Public safety is complicated, and the results are never known in advance.  Our public safety personnel train and prepare for what we all hope will never happen.  But they are ready.

The way your government serves you is not always so dramatic.

But every day, in every department, I see that same kind of dedication and skill.

It exists in:

* the enthusiasm our school teachers bring with them every day to educate our children;
* It exists in our crossing guards and bus drivers committed to everyone’s safe arrival at school;
* It exists in our coaches, faculty advisors, cafeteria workers and volunteers who support and complement the educational experience;
* it exists in our police officers who fearlessly confront dangerous situations;
* it exists in the diligence of our staffers and clerks in all city departments who attend to the mundane but indispensable tasks that make our city function.
* It exists on frigid winter nights or steamy summer days when our public works employees are fixing a broken water pipe or helping prepare the City for the next snowstorm or severe weather event.

Yes, it’s easy to take all of City government for granted, until we stop and realize that these public servants of all stripes play a vital role in making our City a place for families to feel secure, to enjoy their community, to prosper, and to receive the services that let our residents truly feel that Revere is “home.”

That, my fellow citizens, is a snapshot of where we are. So what is my commentary, my grand summation?  Simple:

We are not done.

Which brings us to the future.

A year from now, I expect to report to you on the progress at Suffolk Downs.

You know that both the City of Revere and the City of Boston await Amazon’s decision about HQ2. It is a surreal prospect that our proposal is one of only twenty in all of North America that may eventually deliver Amazon's second world headquarters.

We have made our best pitch to attract this exceptional company, and the prospects are staggering.

But even if Amazon heads elsewhere, the future is now at Suffolk Downs, Wonderland and NECCO. These parcels hold the key to our City’s future, and the decisions we will weigh and determine will ripple for generations to come. We have an unprecedented responsibility that requires forward thinking and swift action. This is a momentous chance to which we all must rise.

It is true that growing pains accompany growth. As the Metropolitan Boston economy explodes, older communities like Revere that form the core of Greater Boston not only reap the benefits of economic vitality, we also endure its consequences. These include skyrocketing housing costs, traffic, and increased demands on infrastructure and public services.  But it would be misguided to spurn the opportunities that lie ahead, and foolhardy to think we can resist them.

That is why we are combining commercial development as a complement to residential development, linking infrastructure improvements to building and encouraging commercial investment in Revere.

In the Suffolk Downs zoning overlay district that was proposed to the City Council, we envision a mix of commercial, residential, and open space that will become a centerpiece of our City and maximize the location and advantages of this exceptional parcel of land.

The Revere growing right before our eyes is a City attracting high-quality development, innovative businesses, and will offer unprecedented amenities and recreational venues for our residents.

All this happens, and will continue to happen, because of cooperative efforts among residents, stakeholders, and those within city government. I am enthusiastic to work in harmony with my partners at the local,state and federal levels to share and implement ideas that will enhance all that is happening in our city.

And while we tackle these challenges, we pledge to retain our unique personality and identity.

It is incumbent on the leaders of this City:

* to resist reluctance while we cultivate confidence;
* to meet adversity with vision;
* to vigorously prepare for what lies ahead.

A year from now, I expect to report how Revere’s trajectory of economic vitality and community prosperity continues to rise and we promote an improved quality of life for all residents.

I hope to report good news on the City’s continuing effort to gain funding for a new high school. For our school department to maintain its current success and excel in the future, it is imperative that we not only construct a new high school, but that we renovate the current high school into a centralized middle school, and convert our middle schools into elementary schools. This is a goal for the City’s near future, and we are committed to achieving it.

Despite our best effort, the results of some of our initiatives are beyond our control.

But there is one promise, one personal commitment I can make:

When I stand before you a year from now, and consider the statistics and the present and the future that will form the state of the City in 2019, I will do so as I do tonight:

Confident in our enduring ambition to make City government transparent and accountable, and ever striving to make Revere the quintessential place that we love to call our home.

We’ve already done some of the work. We will do more of it.

Please join me as we continue to improve Revere:

Because WE are not done.