

State of the City 2015

Flint's Rebirth

I. Introduction & Acknowledgements

Good afternoon. I thank each and every one of you in attendance.

I want to start by going back to just over a year ago to this same place. In last year's State of the City address I ended by stating that the end to our Valley Forge winter was inevitable, that the snow would melt, that a new season would come. Now I stand before you today to announce Flint's rebirth with the same certainty of last year's forecast of change.

Let me thank and recognize a number of people who are here today.

Thank you to City Council President, City Council members and City Clerk for hosting. The color guard for the glorious display of pride and patriotism.

I am personally so grateful for my family's support and understanding...

I thank Rev. Tillman for the invocation. First Trinity is one of the crown jewels of our community and just a block over from our City Hall. I am thankful that God brought Rev. Tillman and his family into our Flint family and that he accepted the invitation to be here this afternoon. Thank you for your service Rev. Tillman. And also thank you to Rabbi Companez who will provide the benediction.

I want to recognize all of the pastors and faith leaders who are here today. Please stand and let us recognize you for your leadership.

We also have a number of our elected officials who have joined us here today. Please stand so I can recognize each of you. Thank you.

I also want to recognize all of the City of Flint officials and employees who have taken time to be here this afternoon. Thank you to you as well.

This truly is the beginning of a new chapter for Flint: a new birth.

I believe with all my heart that Flint is ready for this change. I thank everyone who has stood by us and stayed with us through this difficult recovery and receivership.

There have been many days of confusion and nights of anguish. I have used all of that to fuel my determination to get to the threshold to where we stand today. I have been extremely frustrated but I have used that as motivation to work harder and smarter, to get more done and to get to this point as quickly as humanely possible given the situation. Now, we are here, this is our time, and we are prepared to take full responsibility for rebuilding this great American city for its new life in the 21st Century.

Many in Flint have been hard at working, laboring to bring about the necessary changes in order for us to flourish after the long decline.

We have prayed
on the truth of our faith:
they that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.

II. Rebirth & Reform

Today, there are signs of rebirth all over the community and in every city department. This afternoon we are going to take a look at many of these signs of rebirth and the challenges that remain in front of us as we nurture further growth, development, democracy and opportunity.

Let's start right here on the third floor with the Flint City Council. The Flint City Council has cemented the recent financial success of the City. Newly enacted ordinances, policies and procedures all in accordance with the voter mandated charter amendments in the fall of 2014 provide a path for the City of Flint to move forward in achieving and maintaining sustainable financial solvency. The financial emergency is over. The Council President Joshua Freeman and Finance Committee Chairperson Monica Galloway are to be commended for their able leadership.

Going to the second floor in the Finance Department. The Deficit is eliminated!
[that's an applause line, the deficit is eliminated!]

The City of Flint is in a positive financial position for the first time in a decade. Budget amendments are being done in a timely fashion. The biennial budget has

been adopted. The budget is stronger and the City's risks going forward are fewer. The City has seen a decline in lawsuits and that has resulted dramatically smaller funding for lawsuits and settlements than has been seen for a decade. Kudos to the entire administration especially Deputy Director Dawn Steele who was promoted from Receivables Administrator to Deputy Finance Director just a few months ago. She is a long term city employee and resident, she accepted the challenge and made it happen...it is Ms. Steele and others like her who will go the extra mile that will make the city succeed!

Related to financial management, going forward, there is a new Receivership Transition Advisory Board that has been put in place. Thanks to Governor for expressing trust and understanding the need to get Flint back to local control. Working together, separate from partisan interests, we now have a strong board with experienced professionals who are also upstanding citizens.

I want to recognize and introduce the board members:

Fred Headen, Chief Legal Counsel at the State Department of Treasury

Brian Larkin, with the Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce

David Maghee, now with the Skillman Foundation

Dr. Beverly Walker-Griffea, President of Mott Community College

Dr. Robert McMahan, President of Kettering University

I look forward to working with the board to continue Flint's financial stability.

And there is a new Charter Commission to look at the entire structure of government. I want to congratulate and recognize the Flint Charter Commissioners.

John D. Cherry, Brian Larkin, Cleora Magee, Victoria McKenzie, Charles Metcalfe, Heidi Phaneuf, James Richardson, Marsha Wesley, and Barry Williams.

The Law Department has funding in place this budget year so the Charter Commission can hit the ground running. It is my hope that the Charter Commission completely engage the community and also takes full advantage of the resources available in Michigan around local government and best practices.

Increasing Public Safety

Let's move from City down Fifth St. to the Fire Department and the Police Department.

Flint's Firefighters have been hard at work but thankfully the number of fire incidents are down 20% from last year year-to-date. With his experience in fire prevention, Chief Cox has made public education and community outreach a major objective. Next week, Firefighters will again take to the streets and begin knocking on doors in the community to discuss with citizens the importance of fire safety and smoke detectors and the Arson Reward Program.

The Arson Tip Line is 1-800-44-ARSON or 1-800-442-7766. Brochures and survey cards will also be handed out and those are available on the resource table as you leave.

All of this work is getting done while the reorganization of the Flint Fire Department is still underway. Nevertheless, the department is on track to further reduce overtime. In cooperation with the new Local 352 contract which went into effect in February there will be more efficient management of the Flint Fire Department and I want to personally thank every member of the team who has made this possible.

Over the past year the Flint Police Department has engaged the community and youth, decreased crime, reduced response time, applied new technology and reformed policies. Police officers and leadership are attending community meetings every month. Overall Part 1 crime including homicides, robbery, burglary is down 9% overall.

Laws are being updated and enforced. Over 100 nuisance and criminal ordinances have been updated, correcting outdated language and ensuring our local laws are fully consistent with state and federal law.

Technology has been applied to improve the functionality of the Department including starting a social media presence, selecting a new records management system, transferring 911 to the regional consortium. The adoption of tasers has resulted in a 90% reduction in prisoner and officer injuries. Over \$250,000 in the

new budget is also is set to be invested into public safety facilities to improve the working conditions for our men and women in uniform. This represents the first improvement of this nature in years and is in line with the adopted capital improvement facilities plan.

Most importantly, the Flint Police Department is taking new steps to engage with the community and youth. The University Avenue corridor initiative is underway to better connect neighborhoods and students with public safety strategies through a million dollar grant from the US Department of Justice. A new Neighborhood Service Center or police mini-station will be opening next week at the Dort Mall. The grand opening is scheduled for Monday, May 11th at 1pm. Another new station will come later this year and improvements will be made at the existing sites. Two listening sessions with youth are being scheduled before the school year is out at both Southwestern and Northwestern on May 11th and May 12th respectively. It is important that we take time to understand the perspectives and concerns of our young people and I applaud Chief Tolbert and our School Resource Officers for their dedication to serving and protecting all.

We have mourned many losses to violence yet we are working hard, collectively as a community. Yes we have our challenges but we are going to listen and respect each other. It is through greater engagement with our youth, in dealing with crime, in preventing fires, that we will save lives.

III. Improving Infrastructure

The value of community engagement, of building our city with the people is lesson could not be any more apparent than with our water woes. We need to take a brief trip so to speak out to the Flint Water Plant at N. Dort Hwy and Stewart Ave. where a lot of improvements are being made and more information is being provided to the public.

Water is a basic human need and access to clean water is a right. A number of improvements have been made and more are on the way. We are working hard to get everyone to be part of the solution. Congressman Kildee has been supportive. Governor Snyder awarded grant funds. The State shifted a loan repayment. The new City Administrator has stepped in and pushed very hard to get projects moving—and to make water more affordable. The new budget rolled back the rate increase for 2016 and cut \$100 from the water deposit required of renters.

The problems are being fixed. The carbon filter is on schedule to be installed in July. New water pipe is going in this summer along Dupont Ave. Valves are being exercised. A leak detection audit is being done on hundreds of miles of pipes. The approved capital Improvement Plan has guided the work. Projects are listed, prioritized, and approved by the state regulatory agency. We expect clean and safe water without any more notices. We must meet that goal.

We also are now transparent with all of the test data and operational reports. They are posted to the website every month. The advisory groups have been very

helpful. While there are challenges going forward, we now have the best experts at the table.

Our own employees are working very hard too. I am taking time with all of the City employees and engaging them to understand how we can be more effective in spite of having limited resources. I went out with a crew from the Water Service Center and saw for myself how professional and dedicated our City AFSCME workers are.

A number of other changes are being made in the City's utility and infrastructure efforts. In the new budget there is a dedicated City Engineer position. A contract is in place with Bioworks and Chad Antle for the long awaited completion of turning the methane gas into usable energy. The new electric generator is expected to be operational later this spring. And with the efficiency of the digester, the final waste is able to be disposed of through land application and the incinerator can be shut down with even greater savings. This efficiency and alternative energy project, which started as Swedish Biogas where Mr. Antle was an engineer, is in the final stages of completion and will result in energy savings for the City starting in this calendar year. This is an amazing story of perseverance and innovation.

Other public works divisions have benefited from innovation too. GPS units have been installed on fleet vehicles. Tablet computers will be issued to work crews. Residents can go online and report issues and complaints. These upgrades benefit

the entire community and all of this moves the City government closer to our mission of providing services effectively in the 21st Century.

IV. Fostering Development

Speaking of citywide work, the Planning and Development Department has become a trusted ally of the entire community and is facilitating public, private and nonprofit investments and programs all over the place in accordance with the adopted comprehensive plan. The City has made considerable progress on the implementation of the Master Plan with over 120 strategies having been initiated with an estimated value of over \$15 million. A summary report is available at the resource table with all of the details. A few projects include: Flint's first LED streetlight conversion, a new 911 communications tower, funds to re-open Harrison St. as a bicycle and pedestrian friendly complete street, new trail construction, wetland restoration at Max Brandon Park, improvements at Flint's youth centers and a lot of blight elimination among many others that I will be mentioning.

Last year I announced the start of a 5 year campaign to eliminate all of Flint's blight. Blight remains a serious threat to our future; the battle is underway and we are making progress.

With the City and Land Bank working together, in more than 1,500 units have been cleared in the past year, double the number in 2013. This is making a positive difference all over the city. The City contributed CDBG funds to demolish 14 commercial structures along Franklin, Davison, and Lewis. We worked together

to secure an additional \$2.6 million for demolition in Civic Park. Northside, eastside, all across the City, demolition has made a difference.

We worked with the Center for Community Progress, the Genesee County Land Bank and many partners and community leaders on the development of the Blight Elimination Framework to better coordinate and leverage activities throughout the City based on an updated survey of all 52,000 property parcels

Last year, the City helped with neighborhood clean ups, trash removal, boarding, and beautification. Rental registrations are being aggressively pursued. Since February 2015, Nan McKay has inspected 282 units. Raul Garcia deserves special recognition. He manages about 300 blight complaints per month. When he sees something that needs to be done, he will do it himself or work with volunteers to address the problem.

Here's how the numbers add up: the new blight elimination framework which was developed last year and recently finalized, identified a need for \$107 million to completely eliminate blight. Over \$9 million through partnerships, commitments and accomplishments within the adopted blight elimination framework was identified in the planning process. Since adoption another \$6 million raised so far this year and we are gathering data on privately funded demolitions too. We are 15% to our new 5 year goal. We are going to keep working on this and

The next big step is to adopt a new zoning code – This will require new development to align with the vision for every part of the city. The new zoning is shifting Flint from blight to rebuilding.

And the rebuilding is already underway. Smith Village houses are selling. Oak Senior Apartments opened its doors. GCCARD and Habitat for Humanity have funding for housing improvements. There is a clear trend of workers, students, seniors and families wanting to live in the city when quality and affordable options are available. This is another sign of Flint's rebirth.

Parks are part of our neighborhood quality of life and we have achieved dramatic improvements by being creative with our limited resources. The City has entered more partnership agreements with Keep Genesee County Beautiful, the Conservation District, and the County Parks. We received grants for Max Brandon, Brennan, McKinley, and RiverBank Park. Construction in Riverbank Park to improve ADA access and river access to the park including a canoe launch and the Genesee Valley Trail will be complete by Fall 2015. In addition, the City has made over \$100,000 in improvements to Berston Center and has plans to invest another \$150,000 of its CDBG into parks and its recreation centers this year. These citywide investments and the partnerships in place to sustain them are more signs of rebirth.

The City's newest open space at Chevy Commons is transforming as we speak. The former brownfield will be a naturalized area and it will be open to the public later this year. Every one of these projects, these accomplishments is a story in

and of itself, a story about strategic planning, community engagement, partnership, and investment. It was a proud moment for me to stand with our US Senator Debbie Stabenow, Congressman Dan Kildee, County Treasurer Deb Cherry, and EPA Regional Administrator Dr. Susan Hedman with the sun shining and all of our partners from the river and university corridor standing together for the last time on the concrete floors of the former Chevrolet factories. History has been made over and over again in Flint and this new era will be no different. The transformation of the site shows that there are things from our past we can build on and things that we have to change as our economy and society evolves.

People are still being drawn to our community because of the opportunities here. The City's economic development efforts are contributing to economic growth.

We are making Flint more business friendly. After two years of careful study and broad input, the City's antiquated business ordinances have been reformed. The new general business license will be free for those that register in the first 90 days after it goes into effect this fall and small businesses and home businesses with less than \$25,000 in revenues will always be eligible for a free license. We want to engage with our business community without creating a burden. For the first time in its history, Flint will have a data base of all businesses so that we can provide better information and services.

Working with the Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce, we engage with every business or investment project that has the potential to bring in jobs. In the past two years we have supported 2000 jobs and \$1.2 billion in investments.

These projects cover a wide spectrum of business types:

a new industrial facility in Buick City

smaller manufacturers like Barette Outdoor and Extreme Precision

the Michigan State University building

new medical facilities

St. Luke's NEW Life center

Oak Business Center and YouthBuild

The Flint Farmer's Market including FoodWorks

coffee and bagel shops

we have seen it all and these are signs of rebirth

The largest investment came from Flint's largest employer General Motors. GM broke ground in 2014 on a \$600 million paint shop at the Flint Assembly plant. The 596,000-square-foot facility was one of Michigan's largest investment projects in 2014 and this project is just the latest of General Motors' investments in its facilities here in Flint.

Currently we are working on more than 40 prospects that could create over 300 jobs along with more than 100 construction jobs. This represents another \$80 million that will be invested in the community and there is more to come.

For example, the City is offering its support to Universal EMS and Metro Medical's proposed project at 5928 Clio Road that will bring jobs and services to an underserved area in North Flint. The City will be contributing the funds needed for

demolition and we are seeking additional public funding for the remediation of the site. The City's Economic Development Corporation provided an early loan to the business as it looked to relocate to the City of Flint and expand and an obsolete property tax abatement was put into place in 2013. This is an example of how we can use everything in our toolbox to bring jobs and development into every part of our community.

The new budget puts more economic development capacity in place with a formal partnership with the Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce and also with the City's Economic Development Corporation. I pledge to do everything within my power to work with City Council and the entire community to make Flint into a city of opportunity and prosperity again as we open the next chapter for Flint.

I am passionate about the need for Flint's prosperity to be broad based and accessible to all. Last September I accepted the White House My Brother's Keeper Challenge to improve the opportunities available in particular to boys and young men of color. Congressman Kildee and Pastor Flynn, both of whom had already been working on related initiatives, stood with me to publicly commit to this work. Paul Joice from the White House SC2 has been instrumental in coordinating our efforts.

Following President Obama's lead, the six goals of My Brother's Keeper relate to nearly all aspects of life for boys and young men of color, from cradle to career.

They are:

1. Entering school ready to learn.
2. Reading at grade level by third grade.
3. Graduating from high school ready for college and career.
4. Having the opportunity to complete postsecondary education or training.
5. Successfully entering the workforce.
6. Keeping youth safe and giving them second chances.

Since January, City staff, Flint residents, and community leaders and students met to discuss the challenges facing young men of color in Flint and to identify actions that can be taken to address those challenges. The report released on Monday summarizes information collected through that process and provides recommendations for action. Full report is online and the summary is at the resource table.

This report provides in-depth analysis of the challenges in Flint, and presents many of the programs and partners already in place to help young men of color. We know that poverty and unemployment is higher for African Americans. We know that educational attainment is lower with only 7.2% of African American males over age 25 have a bachelors degree (over 12 % for Whites). These disparities are unacceptable. Flint must be a City for All.

The most important aspect is that we engaged and listened to youth, we moved beyond the statistics to dialogue.

Thank those who were actively involved in the process, if you attended a session or participated in the working groups, please stand:

For our boys and young adults of color especially in North Flint, we are going to focus on Skills, Safety and Service.

The top priority with skills is expanding community education and including family literacy and adult learning programming with workforce development, GED courses, ESL courses, and vocational training. The City is funding the Literacy Coalition and we will make this happen for the fall of 2015.

The priority with Safety is for the Police Department and community leaders to engage youth and really listen to what they have to say. This is urgent and forums are already scheduled before school is out.

With service, the focus is to connect our young adults with mentoring and opportunities such as AmeriCorps.

I will be creating a task force to keep the work going in 2015. All of us have ways in which we can better advance these goals. All of us must do our part in Flint's rebirth as a city of opportunity for all.

A giant step forward was announced yesterday with the Operation AmeriCorps initiative to renew community education in Flint. Community education is the first

strategy on our list for creating more economic and educational opportunities which directly affects all of our young people.

It is an honor for Flint to be chosen for one of the select communities for Operation AmeriCorps. I want to publicly thank the Corporation for National and Community Service for the innovation reflected in this new initiative and for the trust being placed in us in Flint. As an AmeriCorps alum and as a mayor in the Cities of Service coalition, I know the extraordinary potential that service has to transform the lives of those served and those who serve.

Operation AmeriCorps Flint will propel the renewal of community education, make schools hubs for neighborhoods again, and bring in additional human capital focused on student academic success. Operation AmeriCorps will support 80 AmeriCorps members over two years for Flint schools and many of those members will come from right here in Flint.

The federal investment of \$1.4 million is projected to generate an additional \$360,000 in local cash and in-kind matching contributions, making the total two-year investment worth more than \$1.7 million. None of this would be possible here in Flint without the support of our local foundations. In particular, I want to acknowledge the C.S. Mott Foundation for their foresight with establishing the Flint National Service Accelerator. This partnership with the Community Foundation of Greater Flint and the Boys & Girls Club and now the United Way has been a magnet for bringing national service to Flint and has provided the financial support for national service expansion.

It has been a team effort to design this initiative. The Flint Community Schools, the United Way, the Crim Fitness Foundation and the City have all come together around common goals. One of my promises has always been to have the City and Schools working together. This is yet another sign of Flint's rebirth and it has started at the Brownell Holmes STEM Academy.

We are at the threshold. We, all of us, all people! All neighborhoods! All kids! And we must move forward across the threshold as one, with all, or else this will be another failed attempt at redevelopment, indeed it would be a miscarriage of justice and a dis-service to our democracy.

In America, we have government of the people, by the people and for the people as President Lincoln said. Indeed, on November 19, 1863 in Gettysburg at the height of the civil war, Lincoln stated "we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

While we stand in very circumstances at a very different time, we may draw inspiration from the President's timeless words. In Flint today, all of the sacrifices that have been made and losses that have been endured shall not pass in vain—that this city, under God shall have a rebirth—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall prosper once again."

This is our time. All of our time.

It is time to rally for Flint not against each other.

It is time to show the world what Flint can do.

It is time to fulfill our potential.

It is time to fulfill the potential of everyone in this great American city.

This is our rebirth, Flint's rebirth in the 21st Century.

I praise God for the unity that has been granted to us on the master plan, capital improvement plan, strategic plan, ordinance reforms and shared priorities.

More clearly than ever I see the vision of Flint as:

A City That Works for All

A City With Opportunity for All

A City Truly for All

A Real Rebirth

May God bless all of you and May God bless Flint