



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN



State
of the
CITY

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MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN DELIVERS HIS THIRTEENTH STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

*Mayor calls on business, educational and civic leaders to “answer the call”
and help address the challenges of the coming year*

Buffalo, NY – Mayor Byron W. Brown today delivered his 13th “State of the City” Address at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center. The Mayor called on the community’s leaders in the business, education and non-profit sectors to respond to the challenges of 2019 with the same compassion and commitment that residents demonstrate in responding to our winter storms. The plan outlined in the Mayor’s address will expand opportunities and leverage new resources to tackle the challenges of achieving equity, justice and progress in a manner that leaves no resident behind.

Mayor Brown stated, “I am proud to report to you that the state of our City is strong. We’ve enjoyed great success and exceeded the expectations of many. But the hardest work is yet to come...I am here today to tell you that together we can make 2019 the year that we answered the call.”

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MAYOR BROWN’S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS:

Stepping Up to Strengthen Buffalo and Ensure Equitable Growth

Mayor Brown highlighted nearly two dozen individuals and organizations that are stepping up and working to promote growth in an equitable and progressive fashion. Those highlighted in the speech were:

- Rene Jones, Chairman and CEO of M&T Bank, for bringing 1,000 new tech jobs to the City of Buffalo that will create a differentiated business ecosystem and by making significant talent and resources available to the City to modernize the Department of Administration and Finance;
- Jody L. Lomeo, President and CEO of Kaleida Health, has helped the City transform its Management Information System Department and donated hundreds of tablets for City Departments and Community Centers;
- David Egner, President and CEO of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, is helping transform LaSalle

Park into the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park through a \$100 million gift, which is the largest philanthropic gift to the City in its history;

- Schools Superintendent Dr. Kriner Cash and the members of the School Board for their Education Bargain with students and parents that is working to increase graduation rates to a new high of 65% and double the number of schools in good standing;
- Douglas Jemal for his investments in Downtown, including the purchase of the old Buffalo Police Headquarters on Franklin Street and advancing the City \$10 million to jump-start the next phase of Cars Sharing Main Street;
- Kim and Terry Pegula for making a notable contribution to TRUST BUFFALO;
- Tom Quatroche, President and CEO of ECMC, for continuing to provide good jobs to Buffalo residents, especially those living on the East Side who comprise 671 of the more than 1,000 City residents employed at ECMC;
- Rick Hamister, the New York Region President of Northwest Bank, and John Golding, Northwest Bank Executive Vice President of Business Development, who helped open an East Side branch as part of a \$100 million commitment to community reinvestment;
- David Rust, Executive Director of Say Yes to Education Buffalo, who will open a new Buffalo headquarters on Jefferson Avenue and help anchor a non-profit hub developing this vital corridor;
- Brad Termini and Jon Corn of the Flora Buffalo project are bringing a \$200 million investment and up to 1,000 new jobs with a significant community benefits agreement and contributions to the City for community policing initiatives with the launching of a world class tech cannabis campus;
- Dottie Gallagher, CEO of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, and Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker, President and CEO of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, are providing services that will further enhance Mayor Brown's successful Summer Youth Internship program;
- Matt Montante, COO of the Montante Group, who entered into a Community Benefits Agreement with the City for the project at Gates Circle will result in the hiring of minority and women owned businesses for the project and provide employment opportunities to City residents;
- Robert Rich Jr., Chairman of the Rich Family Foundation and Rich Products Corporation, and Jon Dandes, President of Rich Baseball Operations, who are making a significant multi-year contribution from the Rich Family Foundation to TRUST BUFFALO;
- Dr. Fadi Dagher, President of Cedarland Development, who is developing "The Grid" which will be one of the largest downtown area residential developments with a design that will grow our walkable community;
- Dr. Greg Daniel, whose medical mall project on Jefferson Avenue, and Dr. Rhonda Ricks, President and CEO of R+A+R Development, Dr. Gregory Daniel, CEO of Nidus Development, Brenda Calhoun, owner of Onyx Administrative Services of Buffalo, and Pastor Dwayne Jones of Aaron Baptist Church and Pastor William Gillison of Mt. Olive Baptist Church who are serving as catalysts for economic revitalization in underserved neighborhoods;
- Common Council President Darius Pridgen, Majority Leader David Rivera, President Pro-Tem Christopher Scanlon, and members David Franczyk, Richard Fontana, Joseph Golombek, Rasheed Wyatt, Ulysees Wingo, and Joel Feroletto for the City's \$2.5 million allocation for public park space improvements as part of AK360;
- Jeffrey Gundlach, Founder of DoubleLine Capital LP, who matched the City's \$2.5 million contribution to AK360 dollar for dollar and his contributions of \$52.5 million to the vision for a more inclusive Albright Knox.

East Side Transformation

Mayor Brown spoke of the successful investment projects on Buffalo's East Side, which are transforming areas like the Northland neighborhood in the Delavan-Grider community while also announcing a \$65 million investment by the State. The new State investments will help strengthen the economic, educational and cultural drivers on Buffalo's East Side that help spur growth and create avenues for upward economic mobility.

- Highlighted investments by Governor Andrew Cuomo, Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul, Senator Tim Kennedy and Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes in Northland which have become a model for neighborhood based economic development;
- Acknowledged Stephen Tucker, CEO of the Northland Workforce Training Center for the energy and enthusiasm he is bringing to this project which is transforming a community by providing training to neighborhood residents in critical areas that will help them secure good jobs;
- Talked about the completion of Phase II of Northland at the end of next year and the relocation of Buffalo Manufacturing Works this fall;
- Acknowledged Paul Brown from the Buffalo Building and Trades Council and other partners in organized labor who were instrumental in negotiating a Project Labor/Community Workforce Agreement for the Northland project;
- Celebrated the grand reopening of GiGi's Restaurant at Northland Central on Monday, February 25, 2019;
- Outlined the State's new investment on the East Side that will support infrastructure projects, educational activities, additional job-training programs, and affordable housing.

Improving Public Safety

Mayor Brown spoke about the changing nature of public safety with an emphasis on accountability, professionalism, respect for our residents, transparency, and the need to treat all people with dignity. Highlighted initiatives and accomplishments include:

- The promotion of the Buffalo Fire Department's first black female to Lieutenant, Shelby Thompson, who first joined the force in 2000;
- An historic, long-term labor agreement with the professional firefighters of Local 282 that took effect in December and is securing the future of Buffalo's professional Fire Department;
- A \$760,000 investment for a new Rescue 1 that will help modernize the Fire Fleet;
- The relocation of the Buffalo Police and Fire Departments' headquarters to the Michael J. Dillon Courthouse last year, a move that is critical in securing accreditation for the Buffalo Police Department this year;
- The purchase and deployment of body cams to Patrol Officers;
- The cessation of enforcement of low-level marijuana possession offenses by the Buffalo Police Department;
- The launch of the Police and Community Together (PACT) program, which will foster enhanced understanding and communications between residents and the Police Department.

Protecting the Environment and the Impact of Global Climate Change

Mayor Brown spoke about the need to enhance the City's resiliency and environmental sustainability efforts as a way of protecting residents, the planet, and the billions of dollars of investment and growth

Buffalo has experienced. He also acknowledged that the negative effects of global climate change that are being experienced means that Buffalo has an even greater responsibility to the global community to protect our unique natural resources. Highlighted initiatives include:

- The Mayor declared that Buffalo will be a Climate Refuge City;
- In partnership with the University at Buffalo, Buffalo State College, SUNY Erie and Erie County, the City is entering into a power purchase agreement where all the partners will issue separate but linked RFPs to place solar panels on public assets, including 32 City or Buffalo Sewer Authority owned-facilities and sites. This will promote renewable energy use, lower costs, and offer a creative approach to a sustainable future;
- Buffalo State College has been named the Designated Developer of the Dart Street Impound Site which will be converted from a scrapyard into a schoolyard;
- The Buffalo Sewer Authority will release “Rain Check 2.0” in the coming weeks, and through it add hundreds of additional acres of green infrastructure that will help capture rainwater and protect City infrastructure.

Ensuring the Public’s Health

In protecting public health, Mayor Brown identified the following initiatives:

- A new Replace Old Lead Lines (ROLL) program modeled after a successful program in Pittsburgh and made possible by almost \$1 million in State funding. This program will fully replace lead lines when they are broken or damaged in order to prevent lead from infiltrating our water;
- The Help Eliminate Lead Pipes (HELP) program, which will allow residents to round up their Fall water bill payment in order to contribute to a fund that will assist their neighbors eliminate lead pipes;
- A coordinator for the Buffalo Police Department’s Crisis Intervention Team has been appointed and will be tasked with improving interaction outcomes for individuals suffering from mental health issues.

Revitalizing Neighborhoods

Mayor Brown spoke about the challenge zombie properties pose for neighborhoods and the need to incentivize banks and mortgage lenders to work with homeowners facing foreclosure to prevent the property from becoming vacant and not maintained. The Mayor emphasized that when their homes are abandoned and the foreclosure process is not expeditiously completed then it contributes to de-stabilizing communities.

Making Buffalo a Smart City

Mayor Brown spoke about the challenges and opportunities our digital age is bringing to cities across the nation and their residents. He emphasized the need to be forward thinking and digitally inclusive so that technology becomes a tool that helps eliminate social, educational and economic gaps. Highlighted initiatives include:

- A Smart City Strategic Plan is being developed and will guide the City in its goal of becoming a Smart City by 2023;
- Increased capabilities of the Buffalo Roam App and growth in the number of downloads and almost 500,000 posted transactions on it;
- Expanded Wi-Fi on Jefferson Avenue and now the Broadway Market as a result of the City’s partnership with Blue Wireless.

A City Open to All Where Everyone Counts

Mayor Brown spoke throughout the speech about how Buffalo is a City where all are welcome, and no one should be left behind. Over the past decade, Buffalo has become home to refugees from around the world. This has helped revitalize neighborhoods and drive an emerging economy in areas of the City. As the 2020 Census approaches, it is imperative that the City works with New Americans, and community organizations, to ensure that everyone who calls Buffalo home is counted in the census without fear.

Highlights include:

- The formation of a Complete Count Committee 2020 which will work with a variety of community and civic groups to ensure that Buffalo's census count is accurate and reflects the entire population of Buffalo;
- The announcement of the City's Age Friendly Designation by the AARP and World Health Organization, as well as the formation of an Age Friendly Blue Ribbon Commission to make recommendations to the Mayor on additional steps that can be taken to improve the quality of life for aging residents.

Honors and Awards

Near the conclusion of Mayor Brown's speech, he recognized three individuals for their exemplary service to the City of Buffalo and its residents. First, the Mayor recognized retiring Commissioner Martin Kennedy who served in City government for the last 30 years. Commissioner Kennedy was a veteran, dedicated public servant, father of five children and grandfather to thirteen.

Mayor Brown also recognized retiring Commissioner Steve Stepniak for his 32 years of public service. Commissioner Stepniak was a dedicated worker who believed in leading from the front during any storm or other emergency.

Mayor Brown awarded a Key to the City to Frank B. Mesiah, the former president of the Buffalo Chapter of the NAACP who passed away last year at the age of 89. The key was accepted on his behalf by his daughter, Francesca Mesiah. She said of her father, "He would recognize the accomplishments, but he always said, 'we've come a long way but there's an awful lot of work still to be done.'"

Conclusion

Mayor Brown concluded by calling on residents and leaders to work together, demonstrate our City's resolve in the face of adversity and stand ready to seize the opportunities the coming year will bring.

Mayor Brown's State of the City Address luncheon is a benefit for Mayor Brown's Fund to Advance Buffalo, a not-for-profit organization founded in 2006 to improve the quality of life for children and families in the City of Buffalo.

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