



ADDRESS AS PREPARED • FEBRUARY 15, 2019

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

There's something about a storm in Buffalo. It brings out the best in all of us. We help strangers. We check up on each other. We rise to the occasion in a way that has us widely known as the City of Good Neighbors.

We had a blizzard in Buffalo a little over two weeks ago. We did not disappoint. We rose to the occasion once again. Neighbor helping neighbor. Anyone who could help someone else - did. We braved the storm like we have so many others - with concern for one another and a recognition that we are all in this together. We demonstrated once again a compassion and a capacity to help each other that distinguishes us from other communities – classic Buffalo.

When our storms have hit over the years, I have experienced some of my proudest moments as your Mayor. Watching our community unite is extremely gratifying. Action is taken, communication and collaboration are enhanced, problems are solved and we pursue our most important business as human beings - looking out for each other. It is imperative that we hold on to that storm fighter mentality in the year that lies ahead – that we answer the call to make a difference.

I am proud to report to you today 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.

My administration has spent countless hours listening to residents and businesses, studying, analyzing and assessing our challenges to come up with smart solutions that improve our quality of life. After all the numbers are crunched and all the data is analyzed, for me, it all comes back to the storm. Perhaps it's because there is no one to blame, no time to say we moved too quickly, too slowly or pursued the wrong path. We just have to keep moving forward - hand-in-hand, arm-in-arm, shovel-to-shovel. We overcome long odds and difficult challenges because all who can give more of themselves, do, because they can, and because it's the right thing to do.

All of you who are here today believe in and have fought for Buffalo, and I am here today to tell you that - together – with our storm fighter mentality, we will make 2019 the year that we answered the call. A time when we unite, look out for one another, and all give a little more for the benefit of our community. 2020 is approaching - a new decade with new obstacles to overcome. Urban areas across our country are experiencing similar challenges. How do we ensure that Buffalo's progress reaches everyone? The answer is simple – bring the same fight we bring to weathering storms to our everyday lives.

When you see someone struggling - help. When you can give a little bit more for the benefit of our community - do it. When something is broken, help fix it. Recognize that our success as a community will be advanced

by how many we lift up and move forward. How many times we go the extra mile. How many times we help solve a problem. If there are none left behind - we will have succeeded. It's that simple. In life, we know there will always be storms. We must never give in to petty gotcha impulses, but instead extend a hand and say, 'I got you'. When we hunker down, work together and raise each other up, we can weather any storm and come through it stronger than before.

Take a step back and assess our City. You find a unique quality - an inherent characteristic that separates us from other places - an unconditional resolve to help in times of crisis or emergency. We do not shutter ourselves in when the storm comes. We get out and ask, how can we help? Countless acts of kindness for complete strangers follow - a rarity in many places in the modern world - but the norm here in Buffalo.

Today I am challenging everyone who calls the Buffalo region home to respond to the challenges of 2019 the way we respond to a storm - all for one and one for all. We know how to do this. We know how good it feels to help each other, to give a little more of ourselves and to embrace and overcome our shared challenges.

Who is with me? There are many in our community who are stepping up to strengthen our City and ensure that our growth is equitable and inclusive...

Rene Jones at M&T Bank is stepping up – he is bringing one thousand new tech jobs to the City of Buffalo, our region's largest banking employer is working with us and other corporate partners to become a destination for tech talent – creating a differentiated business ecosystem ensuring the long-term success of Buffalo... this will create more jobs—a lot more jobs. And M and T is making a significant charitable contribution to the City to modernize our Department of Administration and Finance.

Jody Lomeo at Kaleida Health has given more – our region's largest private employer continues to expand within the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and Kaleida's charitable contributions are transforming the City's technology. With an emphasis on digital inclusion they've donated hundreds of tablets for police and fire recruits and youth in our Community Centers.

David Egner at the Wilson Foundation has given more, a whole lot more, by that I mean the largest philanthropic gift in the history of the City of Buffalo! One hundred million dollars for parks and trails that connect people. Through "Imagine LaSalle" Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Centennial Park and a regional trail system will be built - and forever maintained.

Dr. Kriner Cash and the Buffalo School Board have stepped up with the Education Bargain with Students and Parents at the Buffalo Public Schools. When students work hard and parents commit to their child's education, the Buffalo Public Schools are guaranteeing a path to opportunity, achievement and success. Graduation rates are up - it's working.

Doug Jemal has given more. He shares my confidence in the future of Buffalo. Along with his development plans for several important Downtown buildings, he is purchasing the old police headquarters and advancing the City of Buffalo \$10 million dollars to jump-start the next phase of Cars Sharing Main Street, to help us attract more investment and create more jobs.

Kim and Terry Pegula at Pegula Sports and Entertainment are stepping up. PSE is making a notable contribution to TRUST BUFFALO to help us continue to grow as a City that people want to visit and enjoy. They also have us believing that the best days for our Buffalo Bills and Sabres are coming soon...very soon...please.

Tom Quatroche at ECMC has given more. In June, ECMC broke ground on its new, state-of-the-art Trauma Center and Emergency Department, which will continue to provide hope, healing and jobs in our community... 671 of the more than 1,000 City residents employed at ECMC live on Buffalo's East Side proving that hiring from your neighborhood works.

John Golding and Rick Hamister at Northwest Bank have stepped up. They've made a one hundred million dollar commitment to community reinvestment, opened an East Side branch on Jefferson Avenue in January and already lead the region in new bank accounts opened. They are exceeding expectations in all business lines proving that the East Side of Buffalo is a good place to be and a good place to bank.

David Rust at Say Yes to Education Buffalo is giving more. Say Yes will open its new Buffalo offices in the non-profit "hub" on Jefferson Avenue... serving as another institution that will help anchor development projects in this vital commercial corridor, while continuing to be a beacon of hope for our children.

Brad Termini has come home and stepped up with Jon Corn. Their Flora Buffalo Project will add up to 1,000 new jobs and put Buffalo at the forefront of the cannabis industry. Our Community Benefits Agreement will ensure that residents of Buffalo who have been adversely affected by punitive drug laws receive direct opportunities from this investment. Additional contributions to the City will enhance our Community Policing Initiatives.

Dottie Gallagher and Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker are stepping up again! They are committed to enhancing my very successful Summer Youth Internship Program so that hundreds of city youth will gain experience to become successful working adults, earn money and learn critical skills that will brighten their futures.

Matt Montante is stepping up with an enhanced package of Community Benefits at the Gates Circle campus, while working with the Beverly Gray Business Exchange and the Buffalo Employment and Training Center to connect City minority and women owned businesses to this project, providing employment and training opportunities at this site.

Robert Rich, Jr. and Jon Dandes are giving more. The Rich Foundation will be making a significant multi-year contribution to TRUST BUFFALO for initiatives that will allow us to keep our public recreational venues safe and well maintained for the enjoyment of our entire community.

Dr. Fadi Dagher at Cedarland is stepping up with a mixed-use project on Main Street near the Medical Campus... "The Grid" will be one of the largest new downtown area residential developments with a design that is transit-friendly and will improve our City, by expanding our walkable communities.

Dr. Greg Daniel, with his medical mall on Jefferson Avenue and Dr. Rhonda Ricks, Brenda Calhoun, Herb Bellamy, Jr. and Pastors Dwayne Jones and William Gillison are giving more – serving as catalysts for economic revitalization in underserved neighborhoods. These new faces of development in Buffalo are helping to drive our opportunity agenda forward.

And every day, all the Members of the Buffalo Common Council step up and deliver for the residents of the City of Buffalo. Council President Darius Pridgen, Majority Leader Rivera, President Pro-Tem Scanlon and Council Members Franczyk, Fontana, Golombek, Wyatt, Wingo and Feroletto joined with me to commit \$2.5 million dollars to improve the public park space portion of AK360, a more inclusive vision for the Albright Knox expansion that will reach every resident of Buffalo. And, Jeffrey Gundlach has stepped up and matched this commitment dollar for dollar.

This is a great start, but this year each of us will need to do even more, to go above and beyond, to help those in need, to look out for our elders and to protect our children.

We need to focus on promoting the health, safety and welfare of ALL of our residents.

Our poverty rate is decreasing, but not enough.

We have nearly the lowest unemployment ever, but we need more jobs.

We have built more than 2,000 affordable housing units, but we need more home ownership opportunities for families in every neighborhood.

We will continue to strategically invest in our community in a way that improves the quality of life for EVERYONE in Buffalo.

We will leverage our partnerships in government to continue to spur investment, inclusive development and job opportunities.

While Buffalo is experiencing growth and development, we are not moving the needle of opportunity for all of our residents far enough or fast enough.

Seeing a need for direct investment with a focus on creating real opportunities in an area of our community that experienced tremendous dis-investment - there were partners in government who stepped up for Buffalo.

Governor Andrew Cuomo, Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul, Senator Tim Kennedy and Majority Leader Crystal-Peoples Stokes stepped up again... And, together, we focused our collective energy and resources on a neighborhood. It was little known to many before we started, but now it's hard to find anyone who hasn't heard about "Northland" in the Delavan-Grider section of Buffalo.

The concept was simple. Create a center to train people for Buffalo's next wave of new jobs and careers. Involve the community, the clergy and the residents of the neighborhood in its planning, hire local residents and help them develop construction skills as the facility is built. Improve the infrastructure and built environment in a world class way that inspires a neighborhood without displacing its residents.

Stephen Tucker is here with us. He has managed the Northland Workforce Training Center with energy, enthusiasm and expertise, ensuring that those seeking opportunity have hope for a brighter future.

In a neighborhood that really needed a boost, we're seeing real results. Northland opened last fall, and this fall Buffalo Manufacturing Works will be moving in and Phase II will be completed by early next year. Paul Brown and our friends in organized labor stepped up and we successfully negotiated a Project Labor/Community Workforce Agreement that directly benefits our community.

The \$65 million dollar Northland Workforce Training Center now serves as a job pipeline to train thousands of City residents and help them find work in the advanced manufacturing and energy industries. To date, 175 students have taken the first step toward successful, sustainable careers.

I am saddened that Blondine Harvin isn't here today, but her spirit, and her son Darryl, are with us as GiGi's Restaurant at Northland will be open for business on Monday, February 25th. The iconic East Side restaurant will re-open to the community it has served since 1959. Monday will mark a very special occasion where we will honor Blondine's passion for and commitment to our community and celebrate the

continuation of her amazing legacy. I for one, will see you at GiGi's on the 25th!

As we rebuild the East Side, we must remain focused on keeping neighborhoods strong by minimizing displacement while improving the quality of life of our residents. Northland is a blueprint for success.

With an additional \$65 million in investment coming to the East Side, we will strengthen the business ecosystem and beautify our streetscapes. We will continue to remove dilapidated and unsafe structures from our neighborhoods. We will encourage homeownership for our long-term residents. We will invest heavily in infrastructure, bike paths and parks. We will encourage healthy lifestyles, higher education and strong vibrant neighborhoods.

We will not settle for opportunities for some. We will ensure opportunities for all. We will not be an average City that provides average services. We will be a world class city that provides world class services. We will not revitalize some neighborhoods, we will revitalize all of our neighborhoods. We will not settle for some people getting jobs. We will give every resident the tools he or she needs to succeed.

As the Mayor of our City, I have gained a unique perspective on how to harness our strengths, as we work every day to keep people safer, healthier and smarter.

Our world is changing, faster than ever, and the way we keep people safe should change with it.

Progress is an important component of that change. Today, I am proud to introduce the first black female in the history of the Buffalo Fire Department to be promoted to Lieutenant. LT. SHELBY THOMPSON has been a Buffalo Firefighter since 2000, and she is here to be recognized for this historic achievement with her family and all of us.

In December, we began a historic long-term labor agreement with Firefighters Local 282, which secures and strengthens the future for Buffalo's Bravest. And earlier this week, Fire Commissioner William Renaldo and his leadership team joined their Chaplain to bless our brand new "Rescue 1" - a \$760,000 investment that continues the modernization of our Fire Fleet.

Last Fall, to enhance interagency cooperation, coordination and training, Buffalo Fire and Buffalo Police moved into their joint headquarters at the historic Michael J. Dillon Federal Courthouse.

This move was an essential component of the Police accreditation process, to train our police officers to the highest standards of professionalism. I am pleased to announce that the Buffalo Police Department is on track to be fully accredited this year. I thank Police Commissioner Byron Lockwood and his leadership team for guiding us through this process.

We are also using technology to increase accountability. We have purchased and will deploy body cameras for our patrol officers. Professionalism, respect, transparency and treating people with dignity are critical to preserving confidence in our Police Department.

As New York State moves forward with the decriminalization of marijuana, we will take a different approach to policing. We will restore a sense of justice throughout our community. Low level marijuana offenses, for too long have derailed people's lives. Today, I am directing the Buffalo Police Commissioner to have his Officers stop enforcing low level marijuana possession offenses.

In order to foster an even closer relationship between Buffalo's Finest and the community, this spring, the BPD will begin a Citizen Police Academy, where residents will have the opportunity to graduate from PACT – Police and Community Together - a program intended to build lasting relationships between community and police.

In addition, a coordinator has also been appointed to implement and manage a BPD Crisis Intervention Team to improve outcomes between law enforcement and people living with mental health issues.

Several years ago we negotiated City residency for new Police Officers and Firefighters, which increased public service opportunities available to City residents for stable, well-paying careers. This has been a success as more than half of our police officers and firefighters are residents, calling the neighborhoods that they protect home.

Our success also requires a smart and sustainable approach. The billions being invested in Buffalo will only matter if we continue to modernize while protecting our resources, achieve efficiency while ensuring that we leave no one behind, and, as a City united, utilize the power of our diversity.

In Buffalo, we have a tremendous opportunity as our planet changes. Based on scientific research we now know that we will be a Climate Refuge City for centuries to come.

Dr. Satish Tripathi at UB, Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner at Buffalo State, Dr. Dan Hocoy at SUNY Erie and Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz are joining with us in protecting our environment. We are launching separate - but linked - RFPs to place solar panels on public assets - including 32 City or Buffalo Sewer Authority owned-facilities and sites. Our “power purchase agreement” will bring renewable energy, positive environmental change, and a creative approach to a sustainable future.

And Buffalo State is also working with the City to transform a scrapyard into a schoolyard, with a designated developer agreement for the Dart Street Auto Impound site.

Last year Buffalo Water was asked by the U.S Water Alliance to lead an equity taskforce to develop water policies and practices that will guide cities across our nation.

The Buffalo Sewer Authority will release ‘Rain Check 2.0’ in the coming weeks, which will serve as the guide for developing hundreds of additional acres of green infrastructure, a formula for resiliency and sustainability across our City.

In tackling our greatest challenges, we must confront risks to public health. The mistakes of the past are threatening our future. We have lead in paint and pipes throughout our City that can pose great harm to our children. Today I'm proud to announce Let's ROLL Buffalo – an initiative to “Replace Old Lead Lines.” We've secured nearly one million dollars in funding so that when a water line breaks or fails - it will be fully replaced – leaving no lead behind. Modeled after a successful Pittsburgh program, this will be our standard practice - but we will need more HELP.

We'll raise additional funding through a “HELP” program - Help Eliminate Lead Pipes. Starting this fall, when you pay your water bill, you'll be able to look out for your neighbors by donating to the HELP fund. If you are unable to make a separate donation, you can simply round your bill up to the nearest dollar. Every little bit goes a long way in helping us eliminate the danger of lead pipes.

The opioid epidemic has brought a seismic shift in perspective in how we treat those struggling with addiction, mental illness and poverty. We need this shift to inform our approach to public safety and opportunity creation. It is easy to say that someone is too far gone to come back from the darkness. It is easy to throw in the towel and to say that we did all we could when we fall short. But that is not us. We must unite and do all we can to understand and help people while destigmatizing these issues.

We've made great strides to stabilize our neighborhoods, but today I am announcing another tool to combat zombie properties. We are releasing an RFP and filing legislation with the help of Councilmembers Fontana and Scanlon to create a Mortgage in Default Registry for the City of Buffalo. If a lender begins the mortgage foreclosure process, they will register with our Department of Permits and Inspection Services. The lender will be required to maintain the condition of the property. And for every issue the City responds to, a fee will be paid by those who set this cycle into motion.

We must recognize that our communities suffer when our neighborhoods lose value and de-stabilize. This is a community challenge that we will meet together.

When we work together, Buffalo's economic potential is limitless. The growth we are experiencing in the health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing and tourism industries is helping to power our economic renaissance, while investment from M&T, Kaleida Health, and other corporate partners is leading to the development of a technology hub in our downtown that will put us on the leading edge of the digital economy.

My Administration is drafting a strategic plan that puts Buffalo on the path to becoming a Smart City by 2023. We will utilize technology to help eliminate the gaps in wealth, education and social mobility.

We are expanding the capabilities of our Buffalo ROAM public parking app, and are working to make WI-FI even more accessible with the help of Brian Gelfand of Blue Wireless. After bringing WI-FI to Jefferson Avenue, Brian is making a new investment to bring WI FI to the Broadway Market. With these initiatives, Buffalo will be a more digitally-inclusive City.

I am proud that Buffalo is a welcoming city. A place where New Americans come to feel safe and secure and build for a better future. We have the space and the infrastructure to grow, and we are in a better position to expand than we have been anytime in this century.

We've partnered with our resettlement agencies, our schools and our community organizations to develop a robust infrastructure to acclimate New Americans to their new home. While others are interested in building walls to keep people out, we are focused on building community, and will establish a Complete Count Committee for the 2020 Census in the City of Buffalo.

I'm pleased to announce that in 2018, the City of Buffalo was recognized by AARP as an Age Friendly City for the work our Department of Community Services has done to address the health and wellbeing of our City's aging population. To build on the great work of Commissioner Otis T. Barker and Director Doug Ruffin, I have convened a Blue Ribbon Commission to make recommendations that will further enhance the quality of life for all residents.

Now, proving once again that experience should be celebrated, I'd like to thank the officially "retired" composer, conductor, songwriter, educator and recording artist, Ella E. Robinson, Director of The New Beginnings Choral Ensemble for the music at the beginning of today's program. You could certainly feel the energy they brought to this room!

The Washington Post said, “our chill is offset by our charm” - I agree. In Buffalo, we celebrate our diversity and our unity. We bond through advocacy, art, culture, entertainment, recreation, sports and commitment to public service. We honor our past, appreciate our present, and most importantly, blaze our own trails for the future, while we commit to leaving no one behind.

We take pride in our City. We wear it like a badge of honor - like a lapel pin of sorts. When the chips are down, we band together to form a bond that cannot be broken, even by all that Mother Nature can throw at us. When other communities weaken and get thrown into chaos - we strengthen and we overcome.

This bond is often strengthened by great leaders. Today, I would like to recognize two public servants, who have been dedicated to the City of Buffalo for a total of more than 60 years.

Martin F. Kennedy is retiring as Commissioner of Assessment and Taxation for the City of Buffalo. He began as an assessor and rose through the ranks in government over the last 30 years. A veteran of the United States Army, Marty is a true Irish American patriot who has improved the lives of all of our residents, and who is loved throughout City Hall, and of course by his five children (including our own NYS Senator Tim Kennedy), his 13 grandchildren, and his wife, best friend and constant companion Mary, they are all here today. We thank you for your commitment to our City, Marty. We will miss you.

Steven J. Stepniak is also retiring from the City of Buffalo. He began his career (after baseball) as a seasonal laborer thirty-two years ago, and rose to serve as Commissioner of the Department of Public Works, Parks and Streets. He has led his department with strength, dignity, compassion and a pre-eminent work ethic. He’s helped guide us through many storms... there hasn’t been a day that he couldn’t be counted on to show up for anyone, anywhere across the City of Buffalo. We thank you Steve. And we thank the people you love most in the world – the family who shared you with all of us – your Mom Regina, your mother-in-law Elsie, daughter, Mikayla, sons Matthew and Blake and your wife Miriam, who are all here today. We will miss you Steve.

My vision for this City takes our storm fighting response and applies it daily. If we all take up the challenge of helping each other and give a little more of ourselves, we can overcome the challenges that lie ahead. We need to think of our community as a family and think of those who struggle as the members of our family who need the most support.

The only thing that distinguishes our current situation from a blizzard is the immediacy of some of our challenges. We know when a road is clear, when a driveway is accessible. We know how to help those in need and how to succeed as a community. We just seem to lose sight of daily struggle in times of calm.

It’s against this backdrop where our great opportunity lies. Buffalo has always been something more, something special, imbued with a uniqueness that makes it feel different. We rally and we persevere. We don’t leave half our streets unplowed, we don’t abandon half of our vehicles, we don’t get some of our city back to normal when the storm hits - we finish the job.

I’m asking everyone who believes in Buffalo, everyone who believes we have something very special going on here, to take it to the next level and do even more to help build up our City.

Francesca Mesiah said of her Father Frank, “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’. He was right.

Frank B. Messiah passed away last year at the age of 89, but he has a legacy so large that he will be in our hearts forever.

As I conclude my 13th State of the City, it is my honor to bestow the Key to the Great City of Buffalo to Frank Messiah, Sergeant First Class in the United States Army, the 13th African American to ever wear a Buffalo Police Uniform who served as a patrolman for 13 years.

Frank was born in Buffalo and grew up on the West Side. He graduated from School 77, Grover Cleveland High, and Buffalo State College, all the way through his doctoral studies in educational administration.

He was a teacher, who helped lead the fight against racial discrimination across our City, culminating in the battle that led to Judge Curtin's ruling to integrate Buffalo's schools.

He was the President of the Buffalo Branch of the NAACP for 20 years.

And he was husband to the late Ulrica Caldwell and the proud father of Leza, Nicolette and Francesca, and uncle to Trudy Scott who are with us today, as we honor the life and the profound legacy of Frank B. Messiah. It is in the shadow of his life that we make a commitment to never turn a blind eye to those in need or to those who seek justice. Our strength will be in our unity of purpose. Our focus will guide us to that elevated plain.

There is something electric about this challenge, in the currents of change that are coming. We define the stages of a storm or a challenge in ways that are quite remarkable. We prepare because we know something is coming. We hunker down until we see what we're dealing with and then we do everything and anything that needs to be done to come out on the other side, stronger than when we started. We do not fatigue. We do not falter. We celebrate our resolve and another challenge that we have overcome.

In this year – the last year of this decade – we will succeed. Buffalo prides itself on meeting challenges, the greater our challenges, the greater our resolve. For the first time in a long time we have a chance to turn the pages over. We can write our own story. We can build a legacy of success for all. Opportunity is knocking, we simply need to answer the call.

Thank you, God Bless America and God bless the great City of Buffalo.