



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

State
of the
CITY

MEDIA ADVISORY:

For Immediate Release

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MAYOR BROWN DELIVERS ELEVENTH STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

With a record crowd of over 1,700, Mayor Brown unveiled a number of new initiatives including continued economic development, job growth and training, public safety, and education.

AMONG THE MAYOR'S KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Not raising residential and commercial property tax rates for the 12th straight year.
- Economic development projects including the start of the construction process next month for the Northland Corridor project and another major initiative, the Jefferson Avenue Reconstruction project.
- A plan to renovate over 60 City-owned residential properties.
- The addition of two new Buffalo police sub-stations.
- A continued focus on job training, including the announcement of a new Coding School.
- The City will commit an additional \$1 million to Say Yes Buffalo and Buffalo Public Schools.

BUFFALO, NY – Mayor Byron W. Brown today declared the State of the City is strong, and poised to embrace major opportunities, as he delivered his 11th State of City Address at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center. Addressing a record crowd of business, community and civic leaders, the Mayor emphasized many positive changes and the dramatic growth the City of Buffalo has enjoyed, with an even brighter future ahead.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we’ve come a long way in a short period of time. By working together, we’ve overcome challenges, we’ve earned a positive reputation, and we’ve begun to truly reimagine this City we love. Never satisfied with second-best, always striving to realize new possibilities, we are still a City of dreamers, innovators and strivers, we’re becoming a stronger and more inclusive Buffalo,” Mayor Brown said.

Mayor Brown said since taking office in 2006, his administration has worked to set a firm foundation for Buffalo’s future, embracing a vision for what the City could be, and making it a reality.

“We’ve become a place for new and existing companies from the around the world to relocate and to expand. We’re a hot spot for millennials to live and work. We are an incubator for small businesses launching big ideas, and we are a welcoming City for New Americans,” Mayor Brown said.

He said his administration will continue its strategic focus on inclusive development, infrastructure, business growth, job creation and employment training to create opportunities for all residents, and see the ripple-effect of prosperity impact every section of the community.

“The test of our progress is not whether we added more to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough for who have little,” Mayor Brown said, quoting President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The Mayor cited numerous successes his administration has achieved, including:

- The highest credit ratings in the City’s history.
- A nearly 16 percent reduction in residential property tax rates and a 32 percent drop in commercial rates.
- Delivered 11 consecutive, on-time, balanced budgets.
- Adoption of the historic Green Code, the first comprehensive zoning rewrite since 1953, to ensure smart growth and development that embodies the community’s vision of Buffalo’s future.
- Development of the Buffalo Opportunity Pledge, establishment of the Office of New Americans and appointment of a Chief Diversity Officer to foster a culture of acceptance, diversity and respect throughout the City. Signing of a “local hiring and first source” policy, designed to link local employment opportunities created by City contracts to city residents.
- Launch of the Buffalo Lead Hazard Control program aimed at reducing lead-poisoning through increased education about lead hazards, stepped-up inspection of homes with peeling exterior and/or interior paint and stricter, self-imposed standards for lead levels in drinking water. More than 130,000 lead education flyers, in seven languages were distributed in 2016 and the City adopted a “first in the nation” water action standard of 5 parts per billion, matching the FDA’s standard for the bottled water industry. The City is in the process of testing water from all sources, in all City-owned buildings.
- Building strong working partnerships with the Buffalo Common Council, Governor Andrew Cuomo, County Executive Mark Poloncarz, and many others, to reap the greater rewards that come from cooperation and collaboration.
- More than \$6 billion in continued economic development activity, ranging from the burgeoning Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and Solar City, to the Northland Corridor revitalization and the upcoming transformation of One Seneca Tower, the City’s tallest building.

In today’s State of the City Address, Mayor Brown announced several exciting new initiatives, as well as enhancements to build upon on-going efforts. Highlights of the Mayor’s 2017 plans include:

- No property tax hikes for a 12th straight year.
- Establishment of two new Buffalo Police Department sub-stations, one at the Broadway Market and one at Canalside.
- Creation of “Bigs in Blue,” a program which will see police officers act as a Big Brother or Big Sister to a child, kicking off with students from Hamlin Park Elementary School.

- The Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency will work with McCormack, Baron and Salazar – the county’s most accomplished developer of inclusive communities – on a new mixed-income project, near Jefferson and East Utica, which will include significant community involvement.
- Continuation of investment on Jefferson Avenue, a \$50 million public-private, mixed-use project. The newest component will be the Jefferson Health and Wellness Center, a state-of-the-art medical facility to manage and improve the general health of the neighborhood.
- A March 15th start to construction on the \$50 million Northland Corridor project, which will include the \$44 million WNY Workforce Training Center, featuring a “Coding School” to assist those pursuing careers in the fast-growing IT arena.
- Expansion of the Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment Program to hire more 17 to 21 year olds. Since 2006, more than 22,000 young people have been employed through the program and by the end of 2017, the Brown administration will have allocated over \$10 million to fund it. The program is also going high-tech through a new partnership with HigherMe, a recent winner of the 43North business plan competition. HigherMe’s mobile job application app will empower youth to apply for jobs directly from a smartphone or mobile device.
- An additional \$1 million commitment to the Say Yes education initiative, which helps boost High School graduation rates, bringing the City’s contributions to \$2.3 million.
- A new program to renovate 62 residential properties the City acquired in 2016 from absentee landlords who were not paying their taxes. The City will partner with the Center for Opportunity to repair and maintain the properties. City residents will be hired to work with skilled laborers to learn on the job. A related homebuyers program will assist City residents achieve the dream of home ownership.
- Coming off a record year for recycling – 27.4 percent – the City’s 34 And More recycling campaign is adding a new incentive program, “Let’s Do This!” It will involve Block Club competitions to raise recycling rates and achieve the 34 percent recycling rate goal.
- Enhancement of the City’s highly-successful Clean Sweeps program to add “Super Sweeps.” The beefed-up program will work with homeowners to identify neighborhoods that need street paving, sidewalk repairs and other infrastructure upgrades. Another new component will be “Block Club University,” a training program to better connect neighbors and provide information about availability of City services.
- Launch of the reinvigorated CitiStat 2.0, an issue-based, dialogue-driven process, structured to bring City departments together with outside experts to tackle city-wide issues. The Mayor’s initial priority areas will be Public Safety, opportunity, economic development and quality of life.
- Launch of Open Data Buffalo in Summer 2017, a free, online portal where citizens, researchers, reporters and others can access data sets from various City departments. The data sets will also be used to measure performance and boost efficiency of City service delivery.
- Creation of a Speaker’s Bureau through the Office of New Americans to engage Buffalo’s foreign-born newcomers and equip them to serve on City board and be advocates for their communities. The City will also partner with Journey’s End Refugee Services, Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo and the New York State Office for New Americans to help more immigrants attain U.S. citizenship.

“Yes, we have challenges, we have problems and we have issues yet to resolve, but make no mistake, we are a world-class people, a world-class City – ONE CITY – with the ability to reimagine a better future for all our residents,” Mayor Brown said.

During his State of City Address, the Mayor recognized Buffalo Zoo President and CEO Donna Fernandez, who is retiring this Spring.

“Donna’s vision and her values have guided this institution to a place that is truly re-imagined, and for that, Donna Fernandez, you will always have our gratitude,” Mayor Brown said.

Under Fernandez’s guidance, the Buffalo Zoo has gone from an institution at risk of losing accreditation to a zoo that saw its highest attendance in 30 years in 2016. During her tenure, the zoo added almost \$50 million in new exhibits and attractions, including the very popular Arctic Edge exhibit.

The Mayor also announced he will present the beloved Colored Musicians Club, the longest continuously operating African-American musicians club in the United States, with a Key to the City. Members provided musical entertainment to close the State of the City address.

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