

# CITY OF GREENWOOD

## MAYOR MARK W. MYERS

### 2018 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Welcome.

Thank you for coming today, and thank you to everyone joining us online. I continue to be humbled by the commitment and dedication of my fellow citizens.

And I promise you it pushes me to do the best job I can...*every single day*.

Let's begin today by asking ourselves a question.

What are *my motivations*?

What *inspires me*?

What gets me up in the morning and keeps me going late into the evening?

You know these days, we hear a lot about disagreement....about division, about what separates us. But I think if you ask most people, their answers would follow similar themes:

Faith. Family. Community.

I can tell you that as the steward of *our* community, *I'm* motivated by the responsibility to carry the torch for my hometown's founding spirit: PRIDE and PROGRESS.

PRIDE in what makes Greenwood an exceptional place to live, work and play; and PROGRESS toward an even brighter future.

While preparing for this address – my seventh report on the State of our City – I was struck by how much things have changed over the past six years.

In 2012, I stood before you to propose difficult, but necessary measures to save Greenwood from financial disaster. Today? We're enjoying a strategic resurgence and choosing among several attractive options to improve the quality of life for our residents.

Look at what we've been able to accomplish. And the most exciting part? We've only just begun.

Thank you for all of your work to help get us here. It's truly an honor to serve as your Mayor.

I'd like to thank Indiana's Secretary of State, Connie Lawson, for attending today's event.

I would also like to thank Christian Maslowski, Christine Alfrey, Valle Vista and the entire Greater Greenwood Chamber staff and board for hosting.

The City and Chamber's strong partnership continues to drive economic growth and cultivate an environment where companies feel welcome and supported.

Finally, I want to recognize all Common Councilors in attendance, as well as the members of our City Boards and Commissions, department heads, city employees, and other elected officials joining us today. Please stand and be recognized.

If you've attended one of these events in the past, you'll know I like to go straight to finances and Greenwood's bottom line. Our city continues to be a model for what's possible given a strategic *and* conservative fiscal approach:

- At the end of 2011, Greenwood's Rainy Day Fund reserve balance was \$1.68 million. Today, the City's Rainy Day balance is more than \$2.47 million.
- In 2012, my team inherited an annual budget *deficit* of nearly \$2 million. We were on course to burn through all of Greenwood's savings in about 18 months. This past year, we presented Common Council with a balanced budget for the sixth year in a row.
- In 2012, Greenwood earned a startling two thousand, six hundred dollars on an investment balance of just \$3.6 million. This past year, we earned more than \$113,000 on investments totaling more than \$16.7 million.

Our budgeting process and financial disclosures continue to stand out among municipalities across the state. I'm proud to announce that for the fourth year in a row, our Finance Department is being honored with a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association.

Fiscal responsibility has and always will be a hallmark of this administration. A strong balance sheet keeps our taxes low yet allows for smart, strategic public investment.

One year ago, I presented a vision for the future of our city; a vision founded upon the preserving and revitalizing Greenwood's *core*; a commitment to our history and the authenticity that makes Greenwood unique.

I'm proud to report we've been making excellent progress:

- We kicked off 2017 by opening a completely re-imagined Community Center. The facility continues to wow visitors on a daily basis, and visitation, revenue and membership figures have blown away even-the-most-hopeful estimates.

In 2015, the Community Center had roughly 620 members. Today, that number is more than 2,000 and continues to grow by about 100 new memberships each month.

Visitation is up more than 35 percent, and total revenue has more than doubled, going from \$250,000 to more than \$530,000.

- In March, we unveiled a transformational vision for downtown, including the once-in-a-lifetime development potential for the 19-acre former Greenwood Middle School property.

The proposed redevelopment includes 450 apartments; 130 townhomes; more than 75,000 square feet of office and retail space; a repurposed gymnasium; and nearly 10 acres of new or upgraded open, green space.

If you haven't had a chance to view plans on the touch screen, I would encourage you to do so before you leave. We'll have staff available to demonstrate as well.

- The plans include improvements to downtown traffic and parking, many of which are already in the works, including a roundabout at Madison and Smith Valley, an additional turn lane at Meridian and Main, a new connector road between Surina Way and Market Plaza, and, in partnership with Our Lady of the Greenwood Catholic Church, more than 160 new parking spaces in the heart of downtown.
- If you haven't noticed, our downtown is more walkable than ever. In 2017, we completed the Pleasant Creek Trail extension, providing a connection between Old City Park and the Greenwood Amphitheater, Community Center and Craig Park.
- We announced big changes for Madison Ave. as well, an evolution of the corridor as a walkable experience, with widened, safer sidewalks, a bicycle lane, decorative pedestrian lighting and improved streetscapes.
- Our GROW program continues to spur renovation along Greenwood's most traveled corridors, increasing property values and generating even greater commercial interest.

Our city's core offers a rich history attractive to younger generations of professionals and families who value character and tradition.....the type of character that warrants designation on the National Register of Historic Places, another significant milestone for Old Town in 2017.

And while downtown has been a major focus, last year the city pursued a diversity of projects and initiatives impacting every square inch of Greenwood:

- In 2017, we added more than 16 acres of green space, the first time Greenwood has done so since 2010 and the largest increase since the addition of Freedom Park in 2005.

We announced Grassy Creek Park as well, Greenwood's first new park in more than a decade.

- The city's new recycling program went into effect January 1, and the response exceeded all expectations. We've gone from 5,700 participating households to more than 9,000. This past year, Greenwood collected nearly 2,000 tons of recycling, a 32 percent increase compared to 2016. More recycling and less trash means we can maintain lower rates for all citizens.
- Continuing the spirit of being more environmentally friendly, our utilities team is working to get as many folks as possible to switch to electronic billing for their Sanitary Sewer, Waste Management and Stormwater billing accounts. In 2017, participation in electronic billing increased by more than 56 percent.
- Our "Find It, Fix It" program, an effort to reduce the strain on Greenwood's sanitary sewer system, generated more than 550 bill credits for citizens showing their compliance with sump pump and downspout connections.
- We're revamping Emerson Avenue to maximize the corridor's commercial potential. The boulevard feel will feature tree-filled medians, decorative lighting and a 10-foot multiuse trail. We're currently in the design phase and look forward to construction later this year.
- Now, some of you may have seen our next slide, but for those who haven't, allow me to be the first to show you Greenwood's new wayfinding signage. We've incorporated the city's popular new identity into what will be an informative, consistent wayfinding program. You may have even driven by one of the test locations. Expect to see installation beginning this year.

All this while Greenwood continues to have one of the lowest *per capita* budgets and workforces in Indiana. I am amazed by what our lean operation is able to accomplish. It speaks to the character of our public servants and the hard work you put in each and every day. I will continue to ask a great deal of you, and I know you're up to the challenge.

To reach our goals, we must continue pushing on all fronts:

- Proactive investment and support for economic development opportunities
- Preemptive public safety efforts to address a worsening opioid crisis, including the increases in crime it has brought to our community
- Necessary upgrades and maintenance of our infrastructure
- And the quality of life amenities that retain and attract happy, productive citizens.

As many of you know, I believe these are the four pillars to Greenwood's success:

- Public Safety
- Infrastructure
- Quality of Life
- And Economic Development.

Triumphs in these four areas generate community pride while providing the necessary foundation for our progress.

Let's look at these four pillars, the progress we've made in each area, and some of the exciting things planned we have planned for 2018.

We cannot sit back and relax because there is still so much to achieve.

**Our first pillar is Public Safety.**

With a background in public safety, I understand the challenges faced when trying to keep a city safe. The men and women in both our police and fire departments are heroic beyond description and place our lives above their own in a daily mission to serve and protect this community. Thank you for all you do. You truly are Greenwood's finest.

Last year, we took several steps to maintain and improve public safety:

- We completed Greenwood's signal pre-emption project, installing state-of-the-art technology into traffic signals across the city. The technology works with emergency vehicles to create safer travel scenarios for all drivers.
- We purchased the Police Training Facility, creating significant long-term cost-savings.
- And Greenwood now has a fulltime EMS Chief, an important role as we continue to train our first responders and plan for the many scenarios these brave men and women deal with every day.

2018 will be an exciting year for our law enforcement professionals as we celebrate the opening of Greenwood's modernized Justice Center. Home to the Police Headquarters, City Court, Probation Department and City Clerk's Office, the renovation is moving along as planned, with completion planned for this spring.

We'll also purchase land for and design a new Fire Station, Station 93.

And while these projects will provide an improved public safety infrastructure, the number of police officers and firefighters in Greenwood continues to be much smaller than what best practices recommend.

For Greenwood to succeed, our city must first be safe.

I am deeply disturbed by the forces that continue to prevent Greenwood from having a level of public safety personnel proportional to its size and growing population. Since beginning this administration, we've been able to add only 10 new police officers, which has done little to alleviate a staff woefully below state and national averages.

All of us are now painfully aware of the opioid crisis before us. To properly impact this devastating epidemic, Greenwood must be proactive. We must enact measures to increase prevention, because once a person becomes addicted, they become much harder to reach and much more likely to commit a crime.

Seventy-two of Indiana's 92 counties have enacted a food and beverage tax. For the last four years, I've fought for Greenwood's ability to institute such a tax. I've gone on record several times clearly stating that such funding would be dedicated strictly to public safety and giving our citizens the safety and protection they deserve.

I'm confident today's audience includes officials with the responsibility and authority to see this measure through. Please know that I am speaking directly to you when I say Greenwood needs more police officers. The opioid crisis has brought with it a wave of increased criminal activity, and our city is not properly equipped and staffed to combat it.

### **Our next pillar is Infrastructure.**

I've always said that infrastructure is the most important community issue that gets the least appropriate amount of attention. Given Greenwood's recent and future growth, we must dedicate particular focus and strategic investment toward critical public assets.

And our administration has done just that.

We're paving more roads, adding miles of trails and laying the groundwork for the largest public works project in Greenwood's history. We're upgrading the city's technology and making sure we take good care of our most important natural resource....water.

Let's start with technology because it's an area not often associated with infrastructure. However, like roads, sewers and electrical grids, Greenwood's technology infrastructure needs to be updated to meet the needs of our citizens in this digital age.

And considering city employees were still using typewriters in 2011, I'd say this is an area where some of the most dramatic improvements have been made.

- During snow events, anyone in the city can now monitor, online and in real time, what roads have been plowed, what roads are being plowed and what roads will be plowed next. Plow drivers receive all instructions and report all progress digitally.
- Last year we launched a new and improved online payment portal for the Stormwater Utility. We updated in-office technology as well, giving citizens the ability to pay their utility bill in-person with a credit card.
- I'm pleased to announce that in 2018, Greenwood will launch an exciting new software platform to modernize the permitting process for development projects. The digital transformation will create significant efficiencies and allow our staff to accommodate our progressively active development and construction market.
- The last thing I will say about technology is that I hope everyone is connected to the city via our website and social media networks. I want to congratulate the many staff who contribute to making sure these digital properties are engaging and informative.

I especially appreciate the spirited debate amongst fellow citizens, a great sign of the active interest in our community and its well-being.

In 2017, we tackled a number of more traditional infrastructure projects as well:

- In August, we opened Greenwood's third major roundabout at Smith Valley and Yorktown. As I mentioned earlier, another roundabout is planned for Madison and Smith Valley, and we are in the early planning stages for the seventh at Main and Meadowview.
- My staff is leading the effort on a number of improvements to Stop 18 Road, including a widening just west of U.S. 31. The project includes pedestrian connectivity and a new dedicated right turn lane.
- After several years lagging behind recommended paving schedules, we're using Greenwood's strong financial position to fund an accelerated pace. We're catching up to where we need to be and paving more streets than ever.
- And once we pave our streets, we make sure they stay clean. In 2017, the city collected more than 443 tons of debris during street sweeping. That's more than 2 tons of debris for every mile of road in Greenwood. We're able to do this thanks to strategic equipment upgrades spanning various departments, another benefit of having a solid balance sheet.
- If you don't take advantage of Greenwood's ever-expanding system of trails, I have to say you are missing out on something special. Earlier I mentioned our latest addition,

the extension of Pleasant Creek Trail from Meridian into the Amphitheater, Surina Square and Craig Park.

- We completed the Main Street Trail, too, finishing the final connection near East Street.
- With Greenwood becoming even more connected, we must always be considerate of the many ways our citizens travel. As such, in 2017 staff installed or reconstructed more than 60 ADA ramps throughout the city and will continue to ensure Greenwood's accessibility for all.

Moving from land to water, I have to say it has been quite a year for the city's Stormwater Department:

- First, our staff secured a \$1 million federal grant to assist in the removal of several homes located in a floodway. We acted for the benefit of property owners needing to exit the floodway while receiving fair value for their homes.
- We're in the process of removing other at-risk structures and are applying for additional grant money to provide relief to even more property owners.
- Last September, I was pleased to help unveil the department's new Stormwater Testing Lab & Nature Center. The facility is teaching environmental stewardship to the future caretakers of the planet, and we must give them the information and tools to assume that responsibility.

We also know the limitations of teacher budgets, so we made it free. And it's not just for students. The Nature Center is open to any member of the public who wants to learn more about the benefits of clean water and sustainability.

- The department managed several important construction efforts as well, including a two-stage ditch along Honey Creek Road; the transformation of a roadside detention pond along Worthsville Road into a full-on nature preserve complete with bird houses, prairie grass and native trees; and finally, partnering with a local school to plant more than 220 trees to shield the it from the Worthsville Road lift station.

It's no wonder our Stormwater staff continue to field requests for presentations to state and national conferences. With a full slate of projects planned, we expect another productive year.

Turning to Greenwood's Sanitary Sewer utility, the city continues to make progress on the massive Western Regional Interceptor project. Design for the 10-mile interceptor is expected to be finished by the end of the year. In the meantime, we continue the lengthy process to acquire all appropriate easements and rights of way.



The Western Regional Interceptor is desperately needed to alleviate the current sanitary sewer system and accommodate the additional strain future growth will create. It will provide much-needed relief to the entire system, channeling as much as 7 to 9 million gallons of graywater daily from the Pleasant Run Interceptor, which is currently operating at or near capacity in some areas.

An important piece of the city's sanitary sewer puzzle involves ongoing negotiations with Citizens Energy Group, owners of the treatment plant servicing Greenwood's wastewater.

The company continues a crusade to raise treatment rates, and this administration will continue the fight to make sure Citizens abides by the agreement in place.

**When I speak with other Indiana mayors about the progress we've made toward our third pillar, Quality of Life, it's usually hard to contain my enthusiasm.**

In 2011, there was no Freedom Springs. No splash pad. Greenwood didn't have a play pocket, let alone a trail connecting several play pockets. There was no City Center Park.

Now, with the completion of our re-imagined Community Center, I challenge any other similar-sized city to present their case for a more impactful offering of public entertainment assets:

- Our Summer Concert Series is more popular than ever, welcoming record crowds in 2017. Last year also marked the inaugural season for the city's new Summer Movie Series, an instant hit among area residents.

We've made improvements to the area surrounding the Amphitheater as well and provided greater connectivity via expanded trails.

- Freedom Festival continues to be massive draw, and even more so last year as we were treated to a beautiful day of weather.
- We're trying hard to keep up with demand at Freedom Springs, adding 65 parking spaces for the upcoming season. We're also continue adding to the aquatic center's features, installing a new dropslide that is ready to go for 2018.
- Finally, Greenwood is quickly approaching 300 acres of parkland and will soon construct the city's 15<sup>th</sup> park, Grassy Creek Park. I'd like to see us eclipse that milestone soon.

In 2017, a national not-for-profit made things official by honoring Greenwood with a Playful City USA designation. Playful City USA recognizes cities and towns across the country for creating playspaces and programming to engage local youth through play.

Our strategy to rejuvenate Greenwood's core centers on quality of life improvements as well. Walkability. Improved aesthetics. Connectivity. Local boutiques. Restaurants. Green space.

These community attributes are critically important for attracting both today's professionals and future generations of residents.

Speaking of future generations, I believe we need to do a much better job involving our youth in local government. How can we expect our youth to become informed, engaged citizens if we don't encourage their participation in the civic process?

To me, this is very much a quality of life issue as well.

Not being one to let ideas sit on the shelf, last month I launched a Mayor's Youth Council featuring 15 students from Greenwood Community High School. I am really looking forward to our sessions and would not be surprised if they end up teaching me more than I teach them.

### **The final pillar I'll cover today is Economic Development.**

Genuine excitement.

It's one of the best parts of this job and possibly my favorite outcome of everyone's hard work since this administration came into office in 2012.

Economic interest in our city has never been higher, and I cannot express to you the amount of pride I feel when a potential investor into our community explains why Greenwood.

Some say the schools. Others, the safe, welcoming atmosphere. Many highlight our available land and proximity of one day's drive to more than 75 percent of the country.

The city that once had a difficult time generating any interest in commercial development is now able to be selective about which companies receive tax abatements, using proposed wages as a barometer.

My how far we've come....

It's also remarkable that we've gotten this far without mentioning the Fortune 100 company planning to make one of the largest corporate investments in Greenwood's history.

In October, FedEx announced its plans to build a \$260 million distribution center. The 600,000 square foot facility would encompass nearly 240 acres and create more than 450 good-paying jobs. It's a huge win for our community and the group of individuals responsible for generating commercial activity in Greenwood.

We also welcomed Newgistics, a division of Pitney Bowes. The national distribution company plans to open a new center in a 450,000 square foot facility near the intersection of Allen and Graham Roads. Newgistics says it intends to hire more than 200 employees and invest millions in high-tech machinery for the site.

We're supporting entrepreneurial growth as well, supporting and assisting the 2017 launch of Greenhouse, Greenwood's co-working space designed to support south side innovators, freelancers and those just wanting to expand their professional network.

And while development often involves construction, in some cases, a blank slate is the best strategy.

In 2017, the Greenwood Redevelopment Commission purchased a long-time eyesore located at 1265 North Madison Avenue. The property is right across the street from Greenwood Park Mall, a major destination for both residents and visitors, and it's also one of the first things you see traveling south into downtown Greenwood.

The former strip mall is now being studied for several potential uses as we enhance one of the city's most-traveled corridors.

Our administration has also been working with Common Councilors and appropriate City Boards to begin overhauling Greenwood's zoning code. There is a ton of work to do on this front, but we hope to have new standards in place by the end of the year.

No discussion of economic development is complete without a mention of Indy South Greenwood Airport. The airport continues to be a major asset for the community, and airport staff continue their hard work to accommodate the steady traffic and diverse clientele. I'm also pleased to report the airport is fully leased with a waiting list.

Now, as you may have noticed, we have a special guest with us today. Although I'd like to think that Indiana Secretary of State Connie Lawson came just for my speech, we actually have a very exciting announcement to make.

In a minute, I'm going to invite a few folks to the podium, but first I'd like to provide one more example of Greenwood leading the south side's remarkable resurgence.

As we begin another year of this administration, I'd like to state my motivations; what inspires me; what gets me up in the morning and keeps me going late into the evening.

"Citing Greenwood's family friendly atmosphere, low housing prices and excellent park system, MONEY magazine named Greenwood as one of 'The Best Places to Live in America' for 2017."

PRIDE and PROGRESS.

It's year seven. Let's get to work.

Thank you.