

# **CITY OF GREENWOOD**

## **MAYOR MARK W. MYERS**

### **2020 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

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

Thank you to my wife, Stacie, for your continued support and to my mother and sisters who have attended almost every one of these events.

I'm proud to say that once again, this address is being seen in multiple cities around the world. My son and daughter are watching from Italy where he serves with the 31st Maintenance Squad at Aviano Air Force base. Another of my sons is tuning in from San Diego where he continues to serve in the United States Marine Corps Special Operations Task Force 1st Marine Raiders Battalion. Another daughter is watching from St. Petersburg Florida where she teaches at Sail Future, and I can't forget my other 2 sons whom are located here in Indy.

I could not be more proud of all of my children and thank them for supporting their dad.

I would also like to thank Christian Maslowski, John Ditmars, The Nest and Aspire Economic Development & Chamber Alliance for hosting today.

I want to recognize all Common Councilors in attendance, as well as the members of our City Boards and Commissions, and other elected officials joining us today. If you would please stand and be recognized. Will our department heads and city employees please stand. The progress we've made during the last eight years is nothing short of extraordinary.

Finally, I want to thank area business leaders, many of whom are in this room. Your companies and organizations are the engine powering Greenwood's economy, and your success drives our entire community forward. Thank you for all you do.

As many of you know, just a few months ago I received some unexpected news regarding my health. Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, my immediate thoughts skewed toward negativity and uncertainty.

What does this mean for my future? What will my quality of life become? How is this going to impact my family, friends and colleagues?

And then I thought of Greenwood – the city I love and have called home for nearly my entire life. Our city once received a difficult diagnosis as well.

Facing insolvency, crumbling infrastructure and a long-neglected downtown, some claimed Greenwood was destined to fail.

Well, look at us now.

We're adding jobs, welcoming more visitors and building world-class public amenities.

Old Town, once slated for complete demolition, is now revitalized, with developers from around the country lining up to invest in the former Greenwood middle school property.

Last May, we celebrated what could be one of the most significant economic development announcements in Greenwood's history, a multimillion dollar investment by Cummins. The company says it will bring 500 jobs to our city, each paying an average of \$100,000. And that's just the start.

It took a lot of hard work, but we fought back. We persevered. And now Greenwood is stronger than ever.

As Mayor, I believe one of the most important things I can do is set an example for who we are as a city. As a community. What we believe in and what we value the most.

In Greenwood, we believe in hard work, honesty and never giving up.

We value authenticity, fiscal responsibility and providing the best quality of life for our families and for generations to follow.

Our unified will to improve this community serves as a source of PRIDE and the foundation for Greenwood's continued PROGRESS.

PRIDE and PROGRESS. Never in my life have these words carried so much meaning.

My sources of PRIDE – my family, my faith, my fellow public servants and what we've been able to accomplish for Greenwood. These sources serve as the foundation for my PROGRESS in fighting Parkinson's.

And trust me. I'm gonna fight like hell. Because that's what we do in this city.

Now, if you've attended one of these events in the past, you'll know I like to go straight to Greenwood's bottom line.

Our city continues to own one of Indiana's strongest balance sheets. In 2012, we inherited a deficit of nearly \$3.5 million and were on course to burn through our savings in 18 months. In 2019, our administration presented, and the Common Council adopted, a balanced budget for the eighth year in a row.

Our budgeting processes and financial disclosures remain state-of-the-art. I'm proud to announce that for the sixth 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, making Greenwood one of only a few cities in Indiana that can make that statement.

Conservative spending and sound management allow us to maintain the state's fourth lowest tax rate while still investing in the things important to all of us – public safety, quality of life, public infrastructure and economic growth.

I encourage everyone to visit the city's website where we post all financial data, making it as accessible and digestible as possible.

Our strong balance sheet supported several noteworthy public projects in 2019.

We released a master development plan for the 19-acre former Greenwood Middle School property, providing developers with guidance and overarching themes fitting the city's historic past, public buildings that define Old Town, and features common to successful mixed-use projects throughout central Indiana.

In August, we unveiled the final design for a new downtown fieldhouse, a modern public recreation amenity that will anchor the property's redevelopment.

Last year, we began construction on a re-imagined Old City Park and have made tremendous progress. The new park includes a 23-foot tall cube tower, custom climbing wall and permanent outdoor installations for foosball, cornhole and bocce ball. It will feature an 18-foot wide promenade running adjacent to Pleasant Creek. We're also restoring shelter space, installing a fitness circuit and building a new pedestrian bridge.

In 2019, Greenwood became the first municipality in Indiana to partner with the Secretary of State's office to integrate local permitting into INBiz, a solution to streamline our permitting processes with the state's online portal that serves as a one-stop resource for individuals starting, managing and growing their businesses. We plan to continue adding online permits throughout 2020.

We continue adding trails and greenspace as well, purchasing 40 acres to expand Freedom Park and another 40 acres for a new park near the I-65/Worthsville Road interchange. More exciting news on that southeast side project a little later.

As many of you know, I believe there are four pillars to Greenwood's success: Public Safety, Infrastructure, Quality of Life and Economic Development. Effective execution in these four areas position our community for success, both now and in the future.

Indianapolis continues to be a major driver of population growth and economic development in Central Indiana, and Greenwood must compete to attract residents and businesses.

I am proud to report Greenwood is more than holding its own. And you don't have to take my word for it.

In a recent article, the IndyStar proclaimed, "It's no spoiler to say Greenwood is booming." I couldn't have said it better myself.

Let's look at these four pillars and the role each plays toward creating Greenwood's competitive advantage.

The first is Public Safety.

As many of you know, I have a background in law enforcement and am proud to continue serving as a Reserve Deputy for the Johnson County Sheriff's Office.

I believe that above all else, a city must be safe.

Greenwood is blessed to have brave men and women in both our police and fire departments who are willing put their lives on the line every day. They serve, protect and preserve our community and do so with character, professionalism, skill and honor. Please join me in thanking them.

Thank you for all you do. You truly are Greenwood's finest.

In 2019, we took several steps to maintain and improve public safety beginning with the addition of three new police officer positions and three new full-time firefighters.

For several years now, staffing levels for both Greenwood's Police and Fire Department's have been well below recommended levels and smaller than that of similar-sized Hoosier cities like Noblesville and Kokomo.

In 2019, Greenwood took action to address the issue by adopting a 1% food and beverage tax. The additional revenue – a majority of which will be generated by non-residents and visitors to our city – will allow Greenwood to reallocate budget funding from the city's General Fund and hire even more police officers and firefighters.

Other public safety accomplishments include the launch of Greenwood's first-ever crime mapping software. The new software provides an easy tool for anyone to access data and, if necessary, take greater precaution to lock doors, remove valuables from plain sight and confirm authenticity of solicitors.

Greenwood has always been known as a safe place to live, work and play, but that doesn't mean we should ever let our guard down and allow it to change.

Our next pillar is Infrastructure.

From sewers and stormwater drains to roads, sidewalks and waterways, I've always said infrastructure is the issue that receives the least appropriate amount of attention from elected representatives.

Not in this administration.

For Greenwood to thrive, we must scale our infrastructure appropriately and invest in our public assets. We're upgrading and paving roads, adding trails and have begun construction on the Western Regional Interceptor, the largest public works project in Greenwood's history.

We're modernizing Greenwood's technology and making sure we remain good stewards of our most essential natural resource, water.

Let's start with technology, which is not always thought of as infrastructure. Investments in technology lead to a more efficient, accessible and cost-effective government.

Launched at the end of 2018, our online payment portal for the stormwater utility created a 59% increase in 2019 online payments, collecting more than \$340,000. Our portal for the sanitation utility – which uses real-time payment integration – increased online payments by nearly 50% last year, collecting more than \$5 million. In 2019, we made the site more user-friendly and plan additional updates this year.

Online transactions reduce overhead and help reduce rate increases.

Moving on to what is considered more traditional infrastructure, in 2019, Greenwood continued its emphasis on design, reconstruction and paving of our roads.

With a strategic approach to maximize available state and federal grants, Greenwood is able to improve more roads at a much quicker pace.

Last year, we continued expansion of Worthsville Road to the eastern city limits, a project that will further connect and integrate the rapidly growing southeastern part of the city. Most recently, Greenwood selected a partner for the latest phase of construction, which includes work between U.S. 31 all the way to a new roundabout at Averitt Road.

Once completed, Worthsville Road will drastically improve east-west connectivity in Greenwood and provide area businesses with improved access to interstates and major county and state roads. This is about laying the groundwork for future growth and sustainability, and the impact will be seen for years to come.

The new Department of Public Works building, located on South Washington Street, will open later this year and allow many of our infrastructure-focused departments to be even more efficient.

This includes the city's Stormwater department, which had another busy year in 2019. Greenwood continues to operate a model Stormwater program and is referenced by regulatory agencies for other cities to observe and mimic.

The department's education and outreach team hosted nine events at the Greenwood Nature Center and Water Quality Testing Lab this past year. And when they're not educating about maintaining our waterways, Stormwater staff are out in the community improving them. Diligent drain and pipe cleaning prevented more than 500 tons of debris from obstructing our creeks, rivers, streams and neighborhood retention ponds.

Given the level of activity and exceptional results, it's not surprising our efforts continue to receive accolades. In 2019, Greenwood was given the Award of Excellence from the Indiana Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management. The Indiana Wildlife

Federation recognized our city as well, listing the trail behind the Nature Center as a Certified Sustainable Trail.

As I mentioned earlier, last year marked the start of construction for the Western Regional Interceptor. Stretching 10 miles across White River Township, the project will provide much-needed relief to our entire sewer system, helping eliminate backups into homes and businesses and accommodating anticipated future growth and development.

The Western Interceptor will channel millions of gallons of wastewater daily from the current system, which is already at or near capacity in some areas.

Our third pillar, Quality of Life, offers a direct reflection of who we are as city, what we truly value and how much we are willing to invest in our future.

I can say without reservation that the current quality of life in Greenwood reflects a proud city. Our dynamic public assets show we value family, community and a sound mind and body. Under this administration, we prioritize investment in our future.

These investments are already producing exponential returns to our residents evidenced by rising property values and the addition of high-quality employers.

Investments like Freedom Springs, our exceptional aquatic park, which celebrated its fifth anniversary with another record-breaking year. The popular public amenity hosted nearly 130,000 visitors in 2019. Revenue exceed expenses by more than \$300,000, freeing up budget for other parks projects and operational expenses. Since opening in 2014, Freedom Springs has generated a six-figure return of additional funding to the Parks Department each year.

To accommodate increasingly high demand at aquatic center, we are installing a new shelter house with more picnic tables, as well as additional decking around the lap pool, which will allow for 50 more lounge chairs.

The Greenwood Community Center – another public asset we've chosen for strategic, long-term investment – has become a premier destination for both families and active, health-minded individuals. The facility set records of its own and now counts more than 2,500 members, nearly 50% more than it did a year ago. Annual revenue for the facility increased nearly 35% year-over-year.

Seeking to be more inclusive in recreational opportunities, Kid City began hosting Sensory-Friendly Fridays in 2019, which provides a comfortable and accepting environment designed for children with special needs and their families.

I'm proud to report Greenwood's Summer Concert Series is more popular than ever, welcoming record crowds in 2019. Later this year, we plan to unveil a new public asset that will complement events like the summer concerts held at the Greenwood Amphitheater. Located within Craig Park, our city will soon have a 100,000 sq. ft. open space event lawn. The event lawn will anchor Freedom Festival, WAMM Fest and other music and cultural events. Sidewalks and ADA accessibility have been incorporated as well.

Craig Park will also be home to three new pickleball courts in 2020. The new courts will adjoin four existing pickleball courts built in 2019 and continue Greenwood's embrace of what has become a wildly popular sport in the area. Recognizing an opportunity to harness the sport's growing popularity, last year we hosted the city's inaugural Pickleball Open. More than 100 participants competed in the event, traveling from across Central and Southern Indiana to do so.

Earlier I mentioned Old City Park, which will soon reclaim its status as a cornerstone for activity and community gathering in Old Town. The reimagined park will offer pedestrian connectivity to Greenwood Amphitheater, Craig Park, Greenwood Public Library, the new Madison Avenue trail and the redeveloped middle school property.

Finally, I'm pleased to announce we will soon build a new skate park, replacing the current structures at Northeast Park. As with many of our quality of life projects, the city will work closely with interested members of the community to gain input and insight as we go through the design process.

One of the more remarkable things I've seen has been the community's response to the focus on quality of life. Before 2012, we had no process for citizens to host events in Greenwood. Last year, more than 60 events came through our system. Everything from block parties to neighborhood Easter Egg hunts, outdoor Movies to car Shows and more. There were 15 run and walk events. Our fellow citizens are now volunteering hundreds of hours to plant flowers and decorate the Community Center for holidays.

It's an exceptional display of community building, and I couldn't be more proud.

Our final pillar is Economic Development.

When our administration came into office in 2012, we made several promises. We promised to balance the budget, rebuild our city's infrastructure and create quality of life improvements.

We promised to preserve and revitalize Old Town.

We knew if these goals could be achieved, Greenwood would assume a position of economic development strength and create a competitive advantage for our community to attract game-changing commercial investment and high-paying jobs.

Folks, we are seeing this happen right before eyes.

As I mentioned earlier, the planned Cummins investment has potential to be one of the most impactful in Greenwood history. The Fortune 200 company is building a new worldwide IT Hub that will house at least 500 professional jobs. Standing next to Governor Eric Holcomb, Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett and Cummins CEO Tom Linebarger, I spoke about our conversations with the company and why they considered Greenwood for such an important function of their business.

Financial stability. Accessible and reliable infrastructure. A quality of life desired by employees and their families.

These are the same reasons why Amazon chose to do business in our city. In 2019, the company opened its new Greenwood facility and hired more than 1,200 people.

Greenwood's competitive advantage is generating investment interest from a variety of industries. Working with the Common Council, we seek to support companies and projects that offer diverse and well-paying employment opportunities.

We're now supported in these efforts by Aspire Economic Development & Chamber Alliance. Launched at the beginning of this year, Aspire's leadership, staff and members deserve a tremendous amount of credit for a smooth transition. The newly merged organization creates a number of efficiencies and will streamline business attraction and cultivation throughout Johnson County.

The former middle school property is generating substantial interest. This past August, we released a master development plan for the property and are currently soliciting proposals.

The master plan identifies several goals for redevelopment of the property, including further realization of the vision for Old Town to be a vibrant mixed-use destination featuring residential, restaurant, retail and office development.

Additional goals include enhanced streetscapes, high-quality construction and maximized pedestrian connectivity to surrounding parks, trails and other public assets. We want authentic amenities, seamless integration of green space and opportunities for all ages to live, work and play in Old Town.

In an effort assist and promote development throughout the entire city, we plan to adopt a new Zoning Code. Later this year, we will present a draft for consideration by and input from the Advisory Plan Commission, Common Council and members of the public. The new code – which shamefully has not been updated in nearly 40 years – will propose a more efficient and user-friendly land use and development process.

Another significant driver of our city's economic development is Indy South Greenwood Airport. In June of last year, I joined with members of the Indiana State Police to break ground on the hangar that will serve as the new home base for ISP's Aviation Section, Strategic Planning Section and command staff of its Special Operations Section.

ISP officials decided on Indy South Greenwood due to its close proximity to I-65 and centralized location. Business owners and corporate executives appreciate these benefits, too, which is why we're building a new corporate hangar.

The airport is a tremendous community asset as well, supporting STEM education and development of young aviators and hosting popular annual events.

Now, before we conclude, I have a couple more surprises.



Earlier I mentioned the new downtown Fieldhouse, and today we are pleased to unveil the first public look at plans for the facility's interior layout and design.

The Fieldhouse will be a year-round recreational and fitness center for our residents and serve as a destination for youth sports teams. It will be equipped to host a variety of sports, including volleyball, futsal, badminton, soccer, baseball, basketball, archery, and of course, pickleball.

The new Fieldhouse will feature an elevated, three-lane track for walking and running. It will also have Greenwood's first indoor turf field, complete with an electronic scoreboard and seating for spectators.

The building's exterior will have a kinetic glazing wall that responds to wind currents and undulates to create the look of rolling waves. The interior layout provides for new and enhanced recreational amenities while also maintaining the ability to host public and private conventions.

We're currently preparing final construction documents and anticipate issuing a public bid soon, with construction starting later this year.

Finally, I'm pleased to announce Greenwood will soon add to its list of destination parks and dynamic public amenities. Situated on 40 acres near the I-65/Worthsville Road interchange, the new park is planned to be an outdoor sports complex with ball diamonds, a multi-use playing field, splash pad, and inclusive playground equipment.

We are currently in the concept phase and looking at trails, shelter houses and other features to cater toward local and traveling sports teams and their families.

Folks, Greenwood is on a roll and could not be healthier.

I'm feeling stronger than ever as well. Three times a week, I get up early for nine-round kickboxing sessions. Each routine is three minutes long with constant activity to improve agility, flexibility and muscle mass.

It's actually very similar to Greenwood and our city's current condition. We're agile. We're flexible. And believe me fellow citizens, we are packing a lot of muscle.

When our community looks in the mirror, we can be both proud of what we see, and energized for the progress yet to come.

**PRIDE and PROGRESS.**

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

Thank you.