

CITY OF GREENWOOD

MAYOR MARK W. MYERS

2022 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Welcome.

First off, thank you for being here.

Take a look around the room.

The people next to you, the staff serving us...Everyone in this room plays a strong role in the future of Greenwood. This room is flooded with strong community leaders who are making a difference!

Your support for Greenwood and our future as a city, is the foundation of our pride and progress, and your attendance, today, is a testament to your passion and commitment to our beloved city.

Thank you to those watching online, including my children who live and serve here in Indiana and across this great nation.

I'd also like to thank Christian Maslowski and the entire Aspire staff and board for hosting this event.

I want to recognize all Common Councilors in attendance, as well as the members of our City Boards and Commissions. If you would please stand.

I have the privilege of leading a team of dedicated and service minded city employees. I. Would like to thank all department heads and city employees here today and tuning in online. Thank you for your service and dedication to Greenwood.

We all know the pandemic is far from over and, as we navigate it, we will continue to provide city leadership and support where needed.

I want to thank our local healthcare heroes, medical innovators, educators and first responders. On behalf of the City of Greenwood, thank you for ALL you have done and continue to do for our community.

As most of you are aware, I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2019. I chose to share my journey with my friends and our residents because I welcome the support and believe that we all benefit from awareness about the disease. I have been floored by the love and encouragement I have received over the past 2 1/2 years.

I am thankful and happy to report that my medical treatment (and kick boxing therapy at 9Round Fitness) has helped me stay in front of this condition. I am stronger now and I feel better than I have in 20 years.

Today, I want to start with a story.

Educators play strong roles in our lives. They influence not only what we learn but the kinds of people we become. I'm sure if you took a couple of minutes to think about your experience in school, a certain teacher would come to mind.

I am fortunate to lead the city where I was born and raised. It's an honor to still connect with some of my former teachers. Last June, I received a letter from Gary Vandergriff.

Yes, people still write letters...and positive ones at that.

Mr. Vandergriff was a beloved teacher and football, baseball and basketball coach at the Greenwood High School, and we also went to church together for many years.

In his letter, Mr. Vandergriff said, "I want to express my feelings about what might be called the 'renewed Greenwood'... I walk almost every day in the space you and the parks department have developed and maintain. I love walking in the renewed "old" park. It's a far cry from what it used to be. It's beautiful!" ... He goes on... "We can all be proud of the impression the city presents to its residents and visitors."

Old City Park earned the City many accolades and some prestigious awards, but Coach Vandergriff's approval had special meaning to me.

Mr. Vandergriff is here with us today. Mr. Vandergriff, please stand.

Mr. Vandergriff hit on exactly what we are focused on doing. Whether you sit here today as a resident, community or business leader, I am confident you'll agree that creating the best quality of life is central to what we do.

But, what does it mean? Look around our city. "Quality of life" is everywhere.

"Quality of life" is our parks, our free events and festivals, our more than 50-mile trail network...Speaking of trails, the Greenwood Parks and Recreation Department recently published the five-year master plan that outlined the plan to spend more than \$23 million in the next five years on new park development, trails, equipment and more... This is what investing in the community and quality of life sounds like.

This year alone, we will invest \$10.6 million on new park developments. That deserves some praise.

BUT, quality of life isn't just about our public amenities, it is ALSO about our low tax rate, low

crime rate, our continued economic development and investments, and our improved infrastructure. I would argue that no city does "quality of life" as well as Greenwood. We are investing in and delivering quality of life to our residents and visitors. I am proud to report to you today that we are in our best financial position ever. Let's take a minute to talk about our city finances.

We have the lowest city tax rate of any city our size in the state. Our property tax is less than 7/10ths of one percent of assessed value. Our budget continues to be balanced. I have presented 10 budgets to the common council, and all have been balanced! Our balance sheet is strong. We continue to grow our cash and fund some projects with cash even as we take on debt.

You may think...whoa, take on debt? Why would you do that? Friends, to continue to be the envy of central Indiana and grow our community, we need to invest in it strategically. I believe we need infrastructure and amenities, like the Fieldhouse, Freedom Springs and our park system, that support our community, its residents and our visitors.

Think of this, most of us borrow money to pay for a home. A few pay cash but most of us take out a mortgage so that we can achieve the dream of home ownership. Once again, it's about quality of life.

The city takes on debt for some projects so we can maintain and improve our quality of life. We need good roads and sewers. We need parks and trails. It all works together.

But even as we take on debt, we are smart about it. I believe that when we make long term and large investments, it is best to spread out the payments such that those who benefit pay for it. For example, if we pay for a sewer upgrade, we want to spread payments over the life of the bond so people benefiting from this investment, today and tomorrow, are paying for it.

But you may ask, doesn't it cost to borrow money? You are right.

But given our strong financial position we can take on debt affordably. Our most recent bond interest rate came in at just over 1%. Yes, just over 1%.

Today, I want to make clear, the City of Greenwood does NOT have any bad debt. We only take on fixed rate debt...never variable rates, never speculative...

Are we conservative in our philosophy? Yes, but we also know when we invest in our city, it makes it more attractive and our property values - remember, that home we took out the mortgage on - increase.

The local housing market in Greenwood is buzzing. Quality of place and life, matters for homebuyers and for residential real estate investors. Greenwood is here to deliver on both. So, we are in a good position but how and where we spend is critical.

I often talk to you about our four pillars that ensure Greenwood is positioned as a model city: Public Safety, Infrastructure, Economic Development and Quality of Life. Greenwood continues to execute in all four areas extremely well.

The first pillar... is public safety. Keeping our community safe is job #1 for me and my administration. I'd like to take this moment to acknowledge our incredible police and fire departments, who work tirelessly day in and day out to keep our city safe. Will all the dedicated men and women of Greenwood's police and fire departments here today please stand and be recognized.

Thank you for everything you do and for the sacrifices you make daily.

When we look at public safety, we need to ensure we have the professionals in place to do the job. We made great strides in 2021 to hire additional officers and firefighters. Within our fire department, we welcomed 6 new full-time firefighters, and filled 4 vacant firefighting positions.

Within our police department, we added four lateral transfers and hired three additional officers, bringing the total number of sworn officers to 71. As many cities struggle to hire first responders, I am proud that we are fully staffed. These new and veteran team members are among the best in the Midwest.

How are we the best? We train, we adapt and we innovate. Specifically, we recognize the importance of conversations surrounding policing and the need to improve the relationship between law enforcement and our residents.

In addition, our police officers are passionate about building relationships in the community. It goes far beyond what we traditionally call "police work." Our officers care about giving back to the community. This last year, the Greenwood Police Department teamed up with the Social of Greenwood and Light of Life Lutheran Church to host a community food drive. This put food in the hands of nearly 100 families in need in Greenwood.

As we see the commitment our police and firefighters have to the community, we have to do our part by giving them the tools to do the job. Our fire department is adding a new ladder truck and engine to its fleet and used funds from the CARES ACT to replace all the apparatus run reporting computers on each fire engine.

The police department is leveraging technology in its work. One of the more exciting tools we have added are four new license plate reader cameras. They are strategically placed throughout the city. This technology, in 2021 ALONE, resulted in the recovery of 25 stolen vehicles, 4 missing persons, and 4 wanted persons...which is truly remarkable.

Safety and security are among the most basic things we can do in delivering quality of life in Greenwood. But we also know that having good roads, waterways and sewers are important

too.

This leads me to our next pillar... Infrastructure.

The quality of life here in Greenwood is getting a lot of attention from not only businesses but residents and visitors. We are growing rapidly as we build the Greenwood of tomorrow.

Greenwood is one of the fastest growing cities in the state - a true testament to the great things happening here. This growth is exactly why infrastructure is critical...it keeps our city running...more recently...running on freshly paved streets and sidewalks.

In 2021, Greenwood's street and waste management department poured more than 2,700 feet of sidewalk, and swept almost 450 miles of streets....4 separate times. Our paved trails and sidewalks help us to become a more connected city and improve our walkability and quality of life.

Last fall, we completed another phase of Madison Ave. With this completion, Madison Ave. now features a wider, smoother walk and bike path, improving Greenwood's overall walkability and connectivity.

One of our largest and most recent infrastructure and development announcements is The Madison, which will be an \$83 million redevelopment project that will include hundreds of residential units, along with commercial development and a 500-space parking garage, in the heart of our downtown.

The Greenwood Fieldhouse progress, along with the groundbreaking of the Madison development, are important milestones in a multi-year effort to revitalize old town and ensure the future of its thriving core.

As we look at our growth, we know managing our natural resources is important. Our stormwater department is recognized, statewide, as one of the best. The team held nine events at the Nature Center Stormwater Testing Lab and was chosen to speak at several statewide conferences last year.

They also completed vital city projects including the Tracy Ditch Lift station and Lakeview gate valve and aeration system...and additionally, the stormwater department concluded its second pre-hazard mitigation grant with FEMA and Homeland Security, separating even more homes from the floodway.

The department also purchased a high-tech camera system to inspect pipes and verify if they are adequately clean, or if they are damaged.

It is clear, with each passing year, why our city's stormwater department is referenced by regulators as one for other cities to look to as an example. Well done.

It is also important that we provide diverse housing options to residents. The Madison will be inclusive of town homes, upscale condominiums, and apartments into the heart of downtown, which will all diversify the housing options for all future residents.

This development is also a testament to our commitment to public-private partnerships. The agreement calls for \$68 million in private investment, along with \$15 million in public funding. Our partners in this development specifically chose Greenwood because of our city's strong economic development activity and growth throughout the years.

Ahead in 2022, we look forward to completing our significant investment in the Western Regional Interceptor Project. The 10-mile interceptor is desperately needed to help alleviate the current sanitary sewer system and accommodate future growth.

Phase two construction on this ambitious project began in September of 2020, and is, and I am proud to say this, ON SCHEDULE for completion in mid-2022 and under budget by \$1 million. How about that?

Next up is our third pillar... economic development.

Businesses are taking note of what we have to offer here in Greenwood. When I talk to anyone looking to come to Greenwood, we discuss the whole package...workforce, infrastructure, amenities, tax rate, public safety, accessibility... the quality of life we work hard to create here is what brings business to Greenwood. Since I came to office, we have created more than 44-hundred jobs.

Just last year, we welcomed ERMCO to our growing list of companies choosing to base their operations out of Greenwood, breaking ground on its headquarters this past August. Folks, great companies like ERMCO wouldn't choose to relocate here without the firm confidence in Greenwood's economic positioning.

We're always looking to bring in new businesses. We're always looking to bring in the higher wages, higher salaries, and stable companies, like ERMCO.

Indy South Greenwood Airport saw a 15% increase in fuel sales year to date over 2020, the most sold since the city took over the airport as a department and saw the return of the beloved "Just PLANE Fun," community event in August.

Greenwood is also continuing to benefit from our new Zoning Code. This helps us promote development throughout the entire city.

Our planning department currently has more than 2,500 homes and apartments either under development or in review, making way for more families to build their lives in Greenwood.

These residential developments help us in economic development. When I meet with prospective businesses looking at Greenwood, they invariably ask about workforce development. We NEED housing at all levels to attract new businesses, and Greenwood has various initiatives already in place to expand our housing offerings.

Now this fourth and final pillar is one that our administration has continuously placed a strong emphasis on, one that is critical in not only the beautification of our city, but in creating a sense of community...we had called it quality of life but, as I said earlier, that encompasses ALL we do. I want this pillar to be more about the quality of place.

Our parks, trails, events and amenities are designed to bring a sense of place to our community. This pillar and the investments are central to building a culture in our community.

It's often difficult to contain my excitement and enthusiasm about Greenwood's quality of place when speaking with other Indiana mayors; it is a direct reflection of who we are and the kind of city we want to be.

I am proud to report city events and recreation are in full force, while continuing to encourage and implement guidelines built to keep our residents and guests healthy and safe. It was clear that our residents wanted to be out and involved again.

We saw the return of Monster Mash after it's one-year absence due to COVID-19, and the Halloween Parade also came back after its success in 2020. The Freedom Festival returned to Craig Park, an opportunity for our residents to gather and celebrate the American spirit.

Freedom Springs roared back to life this summer, and sold more season passes than any other year. The Summer Concert series brought music back to our amphitheater. The Pickleball Open brought together pickleball enthusiasts from across the state.

More recently, Kid City Christmas and Breakfast with Santa sold out. Our incredible parks & recreation department work tirelessly to provide these programs, and I want to thank them for all their hard work. Well done.

And, as if they don't work hard enough, did you hear that we are adding another concert series? Some cities only cover summer, but not in Greenwood! Greenwood is adding a Fall Concert series! Thanks again to our team.

Their hard work hasn't been unnoticed though, in fact, Old City Park was recognized by the Indy Chamber Monumental Awards for its excellence in landscape architecture.

The Parks Department has even more excitement on the horizon - we will soon see the completion of the highly anticipated Greenwood Fieldhouse, which will house year-round recreation and fitness

activities for our residents, visitors and traveling youth sports teams. And, by the way, I'm still most excited about those golf simulators....

Our administration continues to prioritize quality of place, not just because it matters, but to attract a skilled, talented workforce.

My talk today has hit on a lot of the things we are doing here in Greenwood. But I want to go back to that letter Mr. Vandergriff sent me. He ended it by saying "...thank you for making Greenwood special."

That means a lot to me. Quality of life encompasses the things we are doing AND the culture we are building. Our human connections are what makes Greenwood special. We ALL are part of making our city great.

If you know me, you know my parents instilled in me the value of community service. My father was a volunteer firefighter and the Mayor from 1976-1980 and mom and dad owned Myers Ambulance Service. I am honored that my family continues that legacy of public service. My wife Stacie and children are my heroes. They teach me and reinforce in me every day that what we do for others is what matters.

As we close out today, I want to tell you one more story. Last summer, an elderly man - I didn't know him - walked up to me. He pointed his finger in my face, and in a gruff voice, said "Are you the mayor?" A little nervous, I responded, "yes, sir." He paused and said, "Keep it up sonny. You are doing great things."

We have done a lot of "great things" in ten years...

- * Our assessed value has increased by more than \$1.47 Billion.
- * We've created more than 4400 jobs.
- * Among all cities with more than 10 thousand people, we have the lowest city tax rate in Indiana.

Today I am here to tell you. We will keep going, we will keep doing great things, we will keep building the best quality of life for all our citizens.

It's year 11. Let's get to work.