

FINAL
STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
Sept. 18, 2014

Ladies and gentlemen, our Queen City is on fire with enthusiasm and energized by an excitement you can feel in the air.

I am happy to report the state of Cincinnati is strong!

Our beautiful historic city is young at heart again.

Today, people are enjoying a new camaraderie, an uplifting spirit and pride in our city's renaissance.

People are eating and drinking in new restaurants in rehabbed historic spaces, bringing new vibrancy to what was until just recently blighted property.

People from all ages and backgrounds are running through the fountains at Washington Park to music of our world-renowned symphony.

New residents are moving to Cincinnati to take advantage of our great business incubators like The Branderly and CincyTech, which attract ideas and innovation to our city.

Cincinnatians wake up nearly every morning to learn that another major infusion of jobs is coming to the Queen City.

Cincinnatians are sitting together at Fountain Square to watch Bengals games in the day or dancing to Salsa there at night, and walking together in the Opening Day Parade.

Nearby, couples are enjoying the new Riverfront Park swings, amazed by how much our city has been transformed in such a short time.

This city believes in its future again.

And this good feeling is bringing us closer to each other as we find new ways to break bread together and toast to our good fortune.

But let's be clear: All of this good cheer resulted from hard work and great effort.

That's the way it should be.

As a community, we worked hard to tackle police/community relations so that our entire city believed that our Police Department is here to protect and serve.

We made great efforts to connect downtown and Over-the-Rhine, and use the strength of downtown to foster the untapped potential in OTR.

Under Mayor Charlie Luken's leadership, we partnered with our business community to make a major commitment to our inner-city by creating and funding 3CDC.

Steve Leeper and his organization have worked diligently to improve our quality of life with Fountain Square and in Over-the-Rhine.

Mayor Mark Mallory, Bob Castellini, Commissioner Todd Portune and others made great efforts to jumpstart the stalled Banks project.

Willie Carden – along with the Parks Foundation and the women of the Red Hat Society -- have made great efforts to build one of the most spectacular riverfront parks in the country.

Countless pioneer developers have taken risk in our urban core, spanning from downtown to Clifton.

Entrepreneurs have rediscovered our brewing heritage and are remaking our image nationally as the home of craft beers.

With great effort, the business community, under Tom Williams' leadership, Uptown leaders and

Gov. Kasich are building an I-71 interchange that will fuel the momentum around UC and

our hospitals.

And we have worked hard to bring thousands of new jobs to our city including GE, Cincinnati Bell and Mercy Health.

So, yes, the state of our City is great and we deserve a moment to bask in this moment of renewed pride.

Like all things, true satisfaction is earned from hard work and great effort.

And there's no doubt we Cincinnatians have worked hard to make our city better.

We couldn't have made so much progress this year without the help and support of my colleagues on Cincinnati City Council.

- Yvette Simpson is making strides in fighting child poverty.
- Chris Seelbach is always looking to make our city more inclusive.
- P.G. Sittenfeld is taking concrete steps to improve our education system.
- Wendell Young is working to reduce infant mortality.
- Amy Murray is helping to turn lemons into lemonade by taking the lead on various transportation projects we have inherited and always doing it with her signature friendliness and good cheer.
- Christopher Smitherman is bringing a whole new approach to fighting crime, with a special emphasis on calling all of us to treat every life as worthy of our concern.
- Kevin Flynn is working to audit the City's books and demand greater efficiency.
- Charlie Winburn, as budget chairman, delivered the first structurally balanced budget in many years.

- And Vice Mayor David Mann is leading efforts to ensure the City pays attention to the needs of those living at society's margins, giving voice to the voiceless.

Let's give them a round of applause.

(applause)

I also want to note the stellar work done by Scott Stiles who, until earlier this month, was interim city manager.

Scott has filled many roles at City Hall over the last two decades, always exceeding expectations.

Scott was put in the middle of a storm with the streetcar fight.

He kept faith with all sides for his honesty and objectivity, then went on to lead efforts to get more cops hired, put the pension on a path to sustainability and help deliver a structurally balanced budget.

Somehow, he also helped bring thousands of new jobs to the city at the same time.

Let's give Scott a round of applause.

(applause)

Cincinnati's good fortune has come in part from City Hall, but even more so from the individual initiatives, daring and energy of our citizens.

Things like Lumenocity, which brings the city together to marvel at music and light;

the continued development of the Smale Riverfront Park, an inviting front door for our region;

our great music festivals like the Jazz Festival, Bunbury and Buckle Up;

the national attention that our restaurant scene and business start-up culture has attracted;
and much more.

With that in mind, I'd like to start a new tradition for the State of the City address.

Each year that I give this speech, I want to take time to recognize some of the people who have gone out of their way to make Cincinnati a better place.

That's why I am starting the City Employee of the Year Award, Mayor's Humanitarian Award, and the Cincinnati of the Year Award.

I am proud to give the first-ever City Employee of the Year Award to Ann Brewton, who works in our Public Services Department.

Mrs. Brewton is an invaluable member of the department's Graffiti Abatement team.

She is extremely dedicated and always willing to step up when there is a special project that needs a high level of commitment.

A few years ago, Mrs. Brewton took on a key role in a graffiti cleanup initiative in Pendleton as part of the Neighborhood Enhancement Program.

She worked difficult hours to locate and remove graffiti as quickly as possible which helped serve as a major deterrent for graffiti taggers, by removing their work before they had a chance take photos of it.

Mrs. Brewton is a hard worker, self-motivated and self-directed.

Please join me in congratulating her on this award.

(applause)

Sadly, this year's Humanitarian Award will be awarded posthumously to Lois Rosenthal.

Although Lois recently left us, her commitment to social justice will be felt for generations to come.

I got to know Lois through my work with the Ohio Innocence Project, which she adopted as her own.

Lois graciously helped make the work possible that resulted in UC students getting 16 wrongly convicted inmates exonerated.

While Lois was known for her commitment to the arts, she had an even greater commitment to help those who couldn't help themselves, and caring for those who had nobody else to care for them.

Her efforts are far too great to recognize, but they include the Rosy Reader program that is a pioneering early childhood reading program and a fresh produce program at the Freestore Foodbank.

Among her many good works,
Lois founded Uptown Arts on Liberty Street in Over-the-Rhine.

This program provides free classes in music, art, acting and dance for low-income children who live in the area.

In doing so, it offers a safe and friendly environment for the children to express themselves and build self-confidence.

Lois' loving husband, Dick, and her children, Jennie and David, are here and I would ask that we all give Lois a warm round of applause.

(applause)

For the first-ever Cincinnati of the Year Award, I am selecting Tim Maloney of the Haile Foundation.

Tim has done so much in the past year to bring us together as a community with his bold

ideas to celebrate Music Hall and our symphony.

Topping the list of Tim's accomplishments is Lumenocity.

The incredible celebration of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's music paired with a dazzling light show has grown in its second year, drawing tens of thousands of people to Washington Park to watch the spectacle.

Not only is Lumenocity a tonic for the spirit, it also brings together diverse elements of our community – the young and old, and the rich and poor.

Even better, it allows some people to be exposed to the arts who may not have had the opportunity otherwise.

As president and CEO of the Haile Foundation, Tim is overseeing a gift of \$5 million to build Carol Ann's Carousel, a fantastic new attraction at the Smale Riverfront Park.

Just as Seattle has its Space Needle and London has its large Ferris wheel on the Thames, the carousel promises to become another iconic symbol of the Queen City available to be enjoyed by all.

Tim has shown not only the ability to give back to this community, but to do it in innovative ways that haven't been thought of before.

Please join me in giving Tim a round of applause.

(applause)

Robert Kennedy said: *"Some men see things as they are and ask, why; I dream of things that never were, and ask why not."*

The Innocence Project, Rosy Reader, and Lumenocity are 3 things that never were and either are or soon will be hard to imagine our city without.

So, we can all look back and marvel at how far we have come in the past year.

But now it's time to look soberly at the challenges that lie ahead.

Too many Cincinnatians still live below the poverty line.

During the next four years, our goal is to transition 4,000 Cincinnatians from living in poverty to living in a household with at least one full-time provider.

If successful, that will represent a 5% reduction in the poverty rate.

My plan -- which I call The Hand Up Initiative -- will provide short-term employment that will put real money in people's pockets while giving them the skills needed to help them find long-term employment.

The Initiative will also help participants keep their jobs by reducing their transportation and childcare costs.

And it will include a new transportation logistics training initiative with Cincinnati State under President O'dell Owens' leadership.

This initiative will be coming to City Council for approval in the next few weeks and I urge their support.

As President Kennedy said: *"If a free society cannot help the many that are poor, it cannot save the few that are rich."*

One of my goals upon becoming Mayor was to improve the number of City contracts awarded to minority- and women-owned businesses.

The City of Cincinnati has a lousy record of minority inclusion, which is unacceptable.

I've convened an Economic Advisory Inclusion Council -- headed by former Councilman Paul Booth and Kevin Kline of Horseshoe Casino -- to turn it around.

Led by consultants Janet Reid, Steve Love and Vincent Brown, we are systematically

changing the way City does business.

The group is looking at best practices in cities like Atlanta and Cleveland, so we can replicate them here.

Meanwhile, we're also streamlining the process for becoming a City contractor and removing barriers.

In fact, they have already brought 25 minority- and women-owned businesses to the City to participate in our new Fast Track Process pilot program.

Also, Tom Fernandez & Raj Chundur are heading my Immigration Task Force.

They are working with a wide range of stakeholders on crafting policies to make Cincinnati the most immigrant friendly city in the U.S.

That, too, will help our economy and increase our diversity.

And, as I have already said, hard work yields results.

Great effort works.

Already, we're on pace to increase the amount of money the City spends with minority contractors by 50 percent this fiscal year – but we still have a long way to go.

With continued hard work, Cincinnati will be a role model for economic inclusion.

And with great effort we will also get the City's financial house in order.

Under the leadership of new City Manager Harry Black, we will be putting together a 10-year financial plan to make sure that we are in balance not just for tomorrow, but for the future.

With great effort, we will finalize our pension deal in the coming months and be able to turn our attention to positive growth opportunities rather than just removing negative

energy from the past.

With hard work, we will reduce poverty, expand opportunity and get our city's books in order.

But there are places in our City where I believe we have made too few efforts in recent years and where we will have to make great new efforts to make up for lost time.

52 places, in fact.

Our neighborhoods.

Our City's renaissance will only be complete when it includes a neighborhood renaissance.

In too many important ways, the City's policies over the last several years have failed our neighborhoods in the very areas that make the biggest difference: safety, basic service delivery and issues involving quality of life and blight.

Most important of these is safety.

From 2009-2013, the City reduced our police force by nearly 150 officers, or 13%.

Worse, our ground-breaking effort at fighting crime – the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence, or CIRV – was allowed to wither on the vine.

Resources were slowly drained away, the program was ignored and it gradually became ineffective.

As a result, we started to see crime statistics ticking upward—homicides increased by 50% last year.

I took office December 1st.

The following month, we had a rash of homicides that got the New Year off to a terrible start and put us on pace to exceed the number of murders from the previous year.

We acted quickly and decisively to stop this trend in its tracks.

City Council and I worked together to get money for extra police overtime that would target crime hot spots.

I also successfully pushed to get funding for two police recruit classes, the first ones we've assembled in years.

A lateral class of 19 officers that are already on the streets and another 60 recruits are training in the Police Academy to join them.

And we revived the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence, also known as CIRV.

This important program targets the most violent offenders in our city – many of whom are usually involved with gangs – using a carrot and stick approach.

The carrot is we reach out to them and offer them the resources and support needed to break free from their destructive lifestyles.

The stick to motivate them, however, is to use technology and targeted efforts to go after the repeat offenders that cause a disproportionate amount of trouble.

Our work is paying off: So far this year, shootings are down by more 17% citywide compared to the same period last year.

The numbers are moving in the right direction, but it still isn't enough – especially if you happen to be the victim of a crime.

Going forward, we will do even more to make our streets safer.

With hard work and great effort, we will reduce the violence.

The most visible signs of your tax dollars in your neighborhood are the conditions of your streets and making sure the ambulance, police cruiser, garbage truck and snow plow are

there when you need them.

As any responsible manager knows, if you don't repave bad roads and buy new vehicles to replace the worn-out ones and – even more importantly, invest in preventative maintenance on existing roads and vehicles to extend their life -- your assets will deteriorate faster than they should.

The cost to just get back to even becomes exponentially more expensive.

From 2009-2013, the City neither replaced enough fleet vehicles nor rehabbed enough streets to prevent an overall decline.

Even worse, virtually no money was invested in preventative maintenance.

This neglect has taken its toll.

The conditions of our fleet and of our streets are now sorely lacking and far below what's acceptable.

55% of our fleet of fire, police and garbage vehicles is out of life cycle.

And the road pavement condition in our neighborhoods -- which is rated annually -- has declined for 5 straight years and is now worse than it has been in a generation.

Simply put, we haven't been budgeting enough to keep our roads in good condition.

(Visual: Show Slide)

These are serious problems and a growing threat to our City's progress.

And these problems will only get worse if we ignore these facts.

You see, it is always tempting to let basic infrastructure go because the first couple of years it goes unnoticed as you continue to benefit from the previous responsible efforts.

But eventually, the bill always comes due.

I will not kick this can down the road.

I believe we have a duty to responsibly manage our assets not only for our benefit, but in a way to pay it forward to our successors and our children.

Anything less would be irresponsible.

So we will level with the citizens about this bad news and develop a practical long-term strategy to fix it.

I am asking City Manager Harry Black to prepare a report for the public and present short-term and long-term solutions to these problems.

Make no mistake, the hole is deep and it will take us years to recover from this neglect.

But we will start.

We will ask for your patience and report to you on a regular basis on how we're doing to improve the situation.

With hard work and focus, we will solve these problems by doing a little bit better one day at a time.

Another failed policy for neighborhoods is the 1- garbage can policy for houses, which has led to historic levels of illegal dumping in our city.

Many of our neighborhoods already are struggling with issues of blight, and this merely served to increase the trash dumped in vacant lots, alleys and even on some streets.

Our Public Services director, Gerald Checco, has not only developed a new garbage collecting strategy to end this bad policy, but he will be doubling the amount of bulk item pickups and junklot clean ups.

We will be asking for City Council support for this new and improved neighborhood

garbage collection that ends the 1-garbage can folly and dramatically increases junk pick up.

With great effort, we will get back to picking up the garbage for our citizens — all of it, not just some of it.

And finally, the neighborhoods have suffered from too little enforcement of building codes, laws requiring grass to be cut, and the nuisance behavior of some tenants in buildings with bad landlords.

Nothing hurts morale in our neighborhoods more than when good neighbors who take care of their properties suffer because negligent neighbors don't do the same -- and bring down the value for all.

In partnership with the Port Authority's Land Bank, Legal Aid, Keep Cincinnati Beautiful and others, I will be proposing dramatic new fines and dedicated resources to address this problem.

Good policing, road paving, fleet maintenance, garbage collection and code enforcement are the basics that neighborhoods rightfully expect and, for too long, they haven't been getting.

We will systematically reprioritize neighborhoods by reprioritizing basic services, which will benefit all equally.

And a neighborhood renaissance will start with these basics.

We must also be pro-active and seek ideas for growing our tax base and improving the quality of life for all of our residents.

We must dare to dream.

Nothing important or impactful happens without first having the courage to envision it.

The renaissance we've seen in downtown and Over-the-Rhine must now be expanded to

our neighborhoods.

I plan on giving our neighborhoods a boost by proposing some much-needed projects in the coming months.

My own experience building the Incline Public House and its extraordinary success at bringing new hope to Lower Price Hill tells me it's an idea that might be replicated elsewhere.

I believe that just as Christian Moerlein brought good cheer to Smale Riverfront Park, we might spend some time to see if similar private investment could anchor Westwood Town Hall and whether a German-style beer garden might be the centerpiece for new attractions at Mount Airy Forest.

Mount Airy is the largest urban park in the nation and -- just as Washington Park revitalized Over-the-Rhine -- some new attractions could revive the West Side, which I believe has not received the attention it has deserved.

(Visual: Show renderings of projects)

We will also bring new fresh food produce to our food deserts.

For 10 years, the Center for Closing the Health Gap under former Mayor Dwight Tillery's leadership has dramatized the issue of unhealthy options and behavior in our inner-city.

In partnership with them, we will bring a new, full-service grocery store to the Avondale Town Center.

This will provide access to healthier and fresher food choices in one of our city's under-served food deserts.

Maybe a new grocery store in the heart of Avondale will help us to begin replacing a sub-culture of guns and early death with a culture of long life and healthy eating.

(Visual: Show rendering)

And later this year, we expect to announce a deal to buy the land needed for the

long-planned Wasson Way Bike Trail.

The 6.5-mile trail would be created on an idle railroad corridor that runs from Xavier University to the Little Miami Bike Trail in Newtown.

This will help improve the quality of life in Evanston, Hyde Park, Oakley and Mount Lookout, and continue our efforts to make Cincinnati more bike-friendly.

We also want to make better use of Burnet Woods near Clifton.

Burnet Woods is an under-utilized gem in our parks system.

UC President Santa Ono has already agreed to help design an improved park and has already started work on the concept.

With great effort, we will do all of these things and more.

We will put new investment into our neighborhoods and we will start by paying back the neighborhood TIF Districts the \$5 million that was taken from them a few years ago, which City Council will have a chance to do next week.

And I hope they do.

With hard work, we will win the future and earn the right to have even more fun.

And we need more fun in Cincinnati.

Fun transcends politics.

Fun makes one smile, or giggle.

Fun is good for the heart and for the soul.

Fun is somehow related to love.

Fun is... well, fun is fun.

With this in mind, I have decided to appoint a "Commissioner of Fun" for the City of Cincinnati who's job it will be to come up with at least one new fun idea in the coming year, and possibly more.

I am happy to report that I am appointing Frank Wood as the City's first Commissioner of Fun and he has graciously accepted this post.

To my knowledge, no other city in America has one -- I even Googled it!

The Commissioner of Fun will not interfere with the fun we already have, he will not require an office at City Hall, he will not draw any salary.

He will do it just for the fun of it.

As the founder of the WEBN fireworks, which has brought us all kinds of fun for decades, I can only imagine what Frank has in store for us next.

The Commissioner of Fun will bring us new fun when we least expect it, so be ready.

Stay tuned for fun coming soon.

Alright, enough fun: Let's get back to work.

If nothing else, I want you to leave here tonight knowing that Cincinnati's future will be won the same way we have won our recent successes — through hard work and great effort.

And now, great effort is needed again to start our neighborhoods renaissance.

My vision is of 52 neighborhoods of safe, walkable and workable streets.

Cincinnati is so steeped in neighborhood lore that neighborhoods mark time.

They mark the pivotal memories of our Cincinnati lives.

In Mount Washington, after my wife's family emigrated here from Jordan in the 1950s and '60s, and they turned a hamburger place into Gold Star Chili.

In Evanston, my maternal grandfather recruited future Marines at Xavier University.

In Mount Lookout, he coached the football team at Cardinal Pacelli School.

In the East End, my maternal grandmother served Meals on Wheels.

The Irish Cranleys moved here from Boston.

In downtown, my great-grandfather and namesake owned Willis Music Company, which has played a vital role in piano lessons around the world.

In Clifton, my grandfather started vascular surgery at Good Samaritan Hospital.

I still remember walking to grade school in Price Hill in the dark to serve Mass at 6:30 a.m., then having to return home to walk my kid brother, Mike, to school.

And of course, it was uphill both ways.

In Roselawn, I remember an exciting day of my childhood when I got to stay up late on a school night to watch Xavier play in the NIT at the Cincinnati Gardens.

In Oakley, my wife, Dena, and I had our first date and now walk our son to Graeter's in Hyde Park Square.

Our son, Joseph, goes to school in East Walnut Hills and like all of you with kids, our marriage and happiness increasingly depends on Joseph's opportunities rather than our own.

During my son's first year, we made a point as a family to walk all the wonderful major parks in our City.

We have inherited great neighborhood memories and it is time my generation started to help create new neighborhood memories for the next generation.

And as your mayor, I am asking you to reach beyond your family to your fellow Cincinnati.

To share your gifts with those who have not yet experienced the greatness of what Cincinnati has to offer.

To make your neighborhood more welcoming.

To build not just the greatest Cincinnati we have ever known, but a city with even better neighborhoods than the ones we grew up in.

To find a way to create your neighborhood memories — as I recounted my own about my family — that expands opportunity to those living on the margins of our city's neighborhoods.

To treat all of our neighbors as part of our Cincinnati family.

Why?

Because our most sacred duty is to leave this world better than we found it.

Because if we improve upon our lot, we will truly deserve the great rewards we are now reaping.

Because we must show our gratitude for the opportunities made available to us from the hard work and great effort of those who came before us.

They don't want to be paid back; they want us to pay it forward.

Cincinnati is feeling as good about itself as it ever has.

For good reason.

We have all worked hard.

But let us work even harder to make it even better.

With humility, let us remember that with great fortune comes even greater responsibility.

And we can build a greater Cincinnati with what has made Cincinnati great — hard work and great effort.

With great effort, we can reduce poverty and expand opportunity.

With great effort, we can stop the killings and give people space to live.

With great effort, we can insure that opportunity reflects the diversity of our city.

With great effort, we can ensure that our neighborhoods receive the basic services they deserve.

With great effort, we can rally around places to eat, drink, shop and just relax, building new restaurants, grocery stores and parks for all to enjoy.

Then we can have fellowship and break bread together, toss Frisbees and picnic together, sit together, toast to the joy of life together, and sip the satisfaction that comes from great effort.

And next year, when we welcome to our city baseball's All-Stars, we will be showing off a City not just gorgeous with natural assets, architecture, parks, arts, restaurants, curb appeal, nightlife, live music, and opportunity — though all of these things are better than ever before — but we will be showing the world a City with soul.

A city of people that accomplishes more working together than we can as individuals, a place not just with a refurbished image, but a renewed spirit.

An All-Star City.

And our great effort will renew the greatness of Cincinnati.

I promise you, I will work my hardest and I know you will, too.

Thank you for being here with me and God bless Cincinnati!
