



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

2019 State of the City
As delivered by Mayor Tom Barrett

Fiserv Forum
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Good morning.

Wow. What a space! Thank you Peter Feigen. Fiserv Forum is getting rave reviews for its beauty, its impact on the neighborhood, and for what's happening right here on the basketball court. Both the Milwaukee Bucks and the Marquette Golden Eagles are having memorable seasons, bringing excitement and pride to Milwaukee. 2019 is a great year to be a basketball fan!

The formula for basketball success is simple: talent plus commitment and, most importantly, teamwork. These are qualities I see throughout Milwaukee. They drive our economy; they help us solve the challenges before us; and they factor in to all the work that makes our neighborhoods strong. Talent, commitment, and teamwork define Milwaukee as we move forward.

The State of our City continues to improve. Overall, our economy is stronger, our neighborhoods are safer, and our future is brighter. Of course we have challenges, and we need people across Milwaukee, and beyond, to come together to address these challenges, and make sure Milwaukee is an inclusive, respectful, and fair city.

There are many many partners energizing our work: community groups, schools, churches, and business people. But today, there is one group in particular I want to highlight: city employees who dedicate their time to improving our community.

Here is one just one example: Public Works employee Calvin Glenn, a sanitation inspector, was on the job in early January when he saw smoke coming from a house near 13th and Cleveland Ave. He immediately stepped up, phoned 911, and ran to the home to alert residents. There were people inside and Calvin did everything he could to help before the Fire Department arrived. Thank you, Calvin. Let's give him a round of applause.

Three police officers: Charles Irvine, Jr., Michael Michalski, and Matthew Rittner were killed while serving the people of Milwaukee. Reckless drivers killed two other colleagues on the job: city crossing guard Andrew Tyler and public works employee Bryan Rodriguez. Each of these individuals arrived at work believing, as we all do, that they would return home when their work was done. And, I can tell you, the families of all of these individuals feel crushing sadness and loss. Milwaukee feels crushing sadness and loss. We remember them with deep appreciation.

The past decade presented remarkable challenges to the people of Milwaukee. We've been through a world economic crisis and a housing market collapse in which billions of dollars in value evaporated right here in Milwaukee. We've endured hostility from politicians in Madison who showed little more than contempt for our city and our residents.

But, oh, how times have changed. In 2019 Milwaukee has a believer in the Governor's office. Investment and housing values are returning. Good things are happening in our city. We have to seize the momentum and keep moving Milwaukee forward.

Last Fall, I visited 37 Milwaukee high schools and talked with thousands of high school students. I saw our next generation of business and community leaders, educators, public servants, and parents. I heard their hopes for a fair and inclusive City, higher education, good paying jobs, and optimism for their future.

But I also heard their concerns about the health and safety of their families and friends, along with their concerns about police-community relations. As we plan and look forward, I want all of us to keep these young people in mind.

Fortunately, the Bucks share my view about Milwaukee with a commitment to our young people. We have partnered with the Bucks, along with the Milwaukee Public Schools to bring quality mentors to young people in our city. Through Mentor Greater Milwaukee we are working to recruit 1,000 mentors by 2021. Let's do it. Supporting and encouraging our students is critical to our city's future. Thank you to Milwaukee Bucks President Peter Feigin, School Superintendant Keith Posley, and Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton for your help and support.

To keep our young people in Milwaukee, we must continue to invest in jobs. Growing family-supporting jobs throughout the city is critical. One neighborhood where we're seeing investment is the Harbor District, an area represented by Alderman Jose Perez.

In September Komatsu, the heavy equipment maker that produces P & H mining machinery, announced it is investing hundreds of millions of dollars in a new campus. This is great news. Komatsu will transform what is now the largest brownfield in the city into a modern industrial campus that combines manufacturing, engineering and office space. Most significantly, it will retain hundreds of jobs and potentially employ up to one thousand

workers in the coming years. Thank you John Koetz, President of Surface Mining for Komatsu, and your colleague Project Director and General Manager Matthew Beaudry.

Michels Corporation is making its own big splash just up the Kinnickinnic River. The first phase of its \$100-million project is under construction at First and Becher. When complete, it will include offices, a hotel and residences. Thank you to Michels Senior Vice President David Stegeman for your leadership as well.

These two major investments along the Kinnickinnic also serve another important function. They help complete my vision of a trifecta where all three of our rivers experience increased economic activity and improved sustainability through access to the rivers and more recreation. This is important because combining economic growth with environmental stewardship makes this city stronger. Now, along each of our three rivers: the Milwaukee, the Menomonee, and the Kinnickinnic, we will see jobs, recreation and public access. That's what draws people to cities.

In addition to the investment on the south side, we are seeing new buildings and growth throughout the city. And, it is important to note most companies that move to Milwaukee or expand their operations here do so without direct city monetary involvement. It's a remarkable list. Companies like Bader Rutter, Hammes, BMO, Wage Works, J.P. Cullen, TechCanary, Graef and others.

Within just the last few weeks, HNTB, Rexnord and EQ, have all indicated they're growing in our city. These companies chose Milwaukee – not for tax breaks or government incentives – but because Milwaukee is a great place to build their future.

So, when people ask me, "how's Milwaukee doing?" I tell them we are fighting back. We are fighting back.

A great example of this has taken shape at 35th and Fond du Lac. Dramatic reinvestment and rebuilding followed the civil disturbance of three years ago. In one of the most significant projects, the shell of the old bank building that was gutted has been reborn.

The vibrancy and enthusiasm at Sherman Phoenix is remarkable. Talk about teamwork and commitment. Food and health-and-wellness businesses -- along with creative and service entrepreneurs – have come together. This is a story of rebirth that has many chapters yet to be written because many of the businesses that now call Sherman Phoenix home will grow-expanding in Sherman Park and beyond. I've said it before: to get something done right, have a woman do it; to get something done spectacularly, have two women do it.

Ladies...the two women behind Sherman Phoenix, JoAnne Sabir and Juli Kaufman, have done spectacular work.

As proud as I am of all the positive commercial activity in our city, we cannot - and I cannot - ignore obstacles to economic success. When other governments use tax incentives to move jobs away from Central City neighborhoods, Milwaukee residents lose.

Companies of course can move wherever they want, but they shouldn't be enticed to move from the Central City with tax subsidies. Tax incentives should be directed to neighborhoods where family supporting jobs can make a difference in creating safe and vibrant communities.

We all know that the best contributor to a healthy city is an economy that provides good jobs. Eliminating economic and racial inequities leads to positive outcomes including better educational achievement, improved public health, and reduced violence. That's why I need business leaders to invest in Milwaukee neighborhoods, particularly in the Central City. It takes leadership.

Did you know this basketball court was assembled at Century City?

It takes leadership. It takes leadership. And we've seen leadership. At Century City we had a big win when Dan Katt and Good City Brewing purchased Century City One. This is an area where jobs are needed most. Thank you Dan for your continued investment in the city of Milwaukee. Good job.

It's a good start. In a time of record employment, we still have unacceptable levels of joblessness in too many areas of the city. Yes there are challenges and I'm well aware of them. But, jobs in our neighborhoods go a long way in meeting those challenges. That's why I need more business leaders to re-evaluate their site selection methods. The solution to finding workers is not forcing them to ride multiple bus routes for an hour or more. That's an unnecessary hardship.

I am calling on business and government leaders to work with me to bring 3,000 jobs to city residents and neighborhoods over the next three years. Let's put the people to work. It simply makes sense to put the jobs where the workers live. Employers can eliminate hours of commuting-allowing mothers and fathers to attend parent-teacher conferences, spend time with their families, and volunteer in their community. And if that happens, Milwaukee neighborhoods will be stronger.

I continue to promote the redevelopment of Riverworks, the 30th Street Industrial Corridor, and our near south side. I am ready to work with any company to show how eager the city is to locate businesses and jobs here.

As we keep fighting for jobs, we are also going to keep working to improve our housing stock. Milwaukee has many wonderful neighborhoods, great options for people who live in the City. But, we all remember the crash of the housing market and its impact.

Since we launched the Strong Neighborhood program in 2014, we have put more than 2200 properties back into the market and added close to \$100 million to the tax base. Last year I announced the 10,000 households challenge, an effort to add or significantly improve 10,000

homes over the next ten years. Milwaukee has made real progress in the first year of the initiative.

In 2018, Milwaukee added more than 500 new homes, improved another 500, and assisted nearly 200 people on their path to homeownership. Behind these numbers are families who have added stability to their lives; there are stronger neighborhoods because of our efforts; and the entire city benefits – with economic improvements, reduced demands on public safety, and increased quality of life.

Our quality public housing has been part of the fabric of Milwaukee for more than 80 years. Our Housing Authority is a leader in innovation. An excellent example of this is the transformation of Westlawn into Westlawn Gardens on the Northwest side. We have some Westlawn fans here.

Westlawn has received international recognition as it converted from a traditional public housing development into a beautifully designed neighborhood. If you haven't visited the area around 60th and Silver Spring to see this, you certainly should.

Now, part of the transformation at Westlawn is Victory Manor, a new residence with 60 apartments that are designed to accommodate military veterans. Its design elements provide a comfortable atmosphere for all who live there – including those dealing with Post Traumatic Stress.

One of our partners in Victory Manor is the Center for Veterans Issues. And, last fall, that organization's leader, General Robert Cocroft, passed away. General Cocroft had a distinguished career including a passion for veterans' housing. Victory Manor is part of his legacy.

A collaborative effort deserving praise is our Compete Milwaukee Transitional jobs program. I started this jobs program to connect underemployed City residents with on-the-job training within city departments. This year we will provide 90 placements. Hundreds of participants have worked through the Compete Milwaukee to deliver city services. That work helps them build skills to increase their chances of sustained employment. Since 2015, 85% of Compete Milwaukee workers have found unsubsidized employment, and together they have earned over \$3.4 million in wages.

Compete Milwaukee provides a new path and a more stable future for City residents like Daniel Mendez Hernandez. Daniel did not finish high school, yet he dreamed of being an electrician. I am proud to report that in the last year Daniel worked six months with electricians in our Department of Public Works. He earned his GED, was hired by ALLCON, a city contractor, and will enter his electrical apprenticeship soon. Congratulations Daniel, and thank you to Allcon President Anna Lopez, and Chief Operating Officer Scott Farina.

Now imagine a Milwaukee child born today—born at St. Joe's Hospital today. Will her life begin with a solid foundation, continue with a good education, lead to a quality career, and, ultimately, a life fulfilled?

What can we - government, the business community, and community partners - do to make sure this child thrives?

2019 is the year to direct our full attention to our youngest residents. Let's come together to prioritize efforts and make smart investments in the future of Milwaukee children.

The library can play an important role in shaping a child's future. Last year, we opened the Office of Early Childhood Initiatives at the library. I want to acknowledge Alderman Cavalier Johnson and Library Director Paula Kiley for bringing this initiative to fruition. Thank you both.

It's part of our commitment to make sure every Milwaukee child is ready to learn by kindergarten. The Office of Early Childhood Education will complement the work of Milwaukee Succeeds. From early childhood education to adult education, our Milwaukee Public Library is the place to read, learn and connect.

In every corner of this city, residents of all ages can connect to resources that enrich their lives in meaningful ways. I'm proud to announce that this year, the library is launching Career Online High School, a program for adults to earn a high school diploma. Thank you to the Milwaukee Library Foundation for supporting important programs like this one.

We have now completed construction or major renovations at six of our neighborhood libraries. I'm looking forward to cutting the ribbon on the next project, the new Good Hope Library at 76th and Good Hope Road.

When it opens its doors next winter, it will be the most technologically-advanced library in our system, serving as an anchor institution in a dynamic Northwest Side neighborhood that already includes Direct Supply, Sellars, the Hmong-American Peace Academy, and the exciting Asian Market on 76th Street—that you should also check out.

Our commitment to our children includes the elimination of environmental hazards. We all know one of the most serious health risks our children continue to face is exposure to lead paint. Every year, thousands of Milwaukee parents take an important step in keeping their kids safe from lead. They have their child's blood tested at an annual checkup or drop-in clinic.

When I took office, almost 35% of the children tested had lead levels above the CDC's safety thresholds. We have made continual progress in reducing the number of children with high lead levels. Milwaukee remains a leader in testing children and making sure they are prepared for school. This is good news and progress.

We all know the Health Department's lead program has faced significant hurdles. That's no secret. But I'm proud the people in the department have stepped up, making improvements and corrections. In fact, I am also proud to report today the US Department of Housing and Urban Development has given us the green light to resume our lead abatement efforts. That's

a significant step. Thank you Milwaukee Health Department employees for this important achievement.

Since I have been in office, Milwaukee's water has always met the federal standards for lead safety. Even so, we have taken bold and proactive steps to replace lead service lines. We have been recognized by other cities and the American Water Works Association for our actions. And we will continue this work.

We have focused attention on schools and child care centers, doing everything we can to ensure our children are safe. And another example of our strategic approach, the Health Department and Water Works have distributed over 6,000 filters to families who need them.

I was glad to work with the Common Council, in particular Alderwoman Chantia Lewis, to make the Board of Health a reality. Our public health decisions must be made based on sound science and the Board will help the Health Department stay on the cutting edge.

There is an impressive amount of good work underway at the Milwaukee Police Department. Officers throughout the city are focused on making our community safer, and over the past year they've made real progress. Last year, car jackings were down 7%, more guns were recovered, fewer shotspotter alerts were detected and both fatal and non-fatal shootings were down markedly. We're headed in the right direction as more officers are in the neighborhoods patrolling the streets and making Milwaukee safer.

Police officers know the most effective way to accomplish their goals is to have community members support their efforts. Trust and respect has to be a two-way street. We need to have our residents work with and respect our police officers and our police officers work with and respect our residents.

Thank you Chief Alfonso Morales and all the hard working men and women in the Milwaukee Police Department.

I also want to acknowledge the work of the Community Collaborative Committee, a community partnership with our Fire and Police Commission and its Executive Director La Keisha Butler. I look forward to your recommendations.

Right now we are recruiting police officers. I want Milwaukee residents who care about their neighborhoods to apply to be a police officer. I want police officers to come from Milwaukee; I want them to live in Milwaukee, and I want them to care about Milwaukee. So if you know a person who cares about this community who wants to lead a meaningful life, tell them to apply. People wanting to make a difference can be part of a department that is working to boost the quality of life throughout the City of Milwaukee.

Another key partner in Milwaukee's safety is the Office of Violence Prevention. Reggie Moore and his team are using a public health approach, and that is a key part of the BluePrint for Peace. The Blueprint calls for strong collaborative partnerships and puts resources on the ground to stop violence before it starts. Through the Blueprint, we are reaching thousands of young people in our city impacted by violence and trauma. I want to thank Alderwoman Milele Coggs for championing the City's trauma reduction work.

Forty partners have received funds. One is My Sista's Keep Her, a grassroots organization that helps girls confront and heal from pain experienced in their young lives.

My Sista's Keep Her reached over 500 girls Just in 2018—helping them find their voice, leadership and sisterhood. Thank you Tina Nixon and Shelley Conley for leading this meaningful effort.

Violence Prevention and all Health Department work is championed by our new Commissioner Jeannette Kowalik. She has provided reinvigorated leadership in the Health Department. In addition to her, in the past year we've seen new leadership in a number of departments: Samir Amin as City Engineer, Karen Dettmer in Water Works, Adam Schlict at Port Milwaukee, Jeff Polenske at Public Works, Kimberly Montgomery - Intergovernmental Relations, and of course, Chief Morales.

Over at the Fire Department, Chief Mark Rohlfing and Milwaukee firefighters see their role as making our city a better place in more ways than traditional fire department duties. They still do that very very well. For example, their successful Warm Up Winter efforts have ensured more than 38,000 Milwaukee kids have new winter coats. They also took on fundraising for a new mobile survive alive house. Thank you to Pieper Electric Foundation for your generous donation for this important safety effort.

Milwaukee is a caring community, a belief shared by my appointees to the the city's Equal Rights Commission. As a result of their work, I am proud to announce the Human Rights Campaign has given Milwaukee a top score of 100 on the Municipal Equality Index, citing Milwaukee's inclusive laws and policies that respect LGBTQ community members. Thank you Tony Snell and members of the Equal Rights Commission for bringing this to our attention.

Now let's turn our attention to The Hop presented by Potawatomi Hotel and Casino.

If there's one enduring truth about Milwaukee, it's that we never back down from a challenge. We had to travel a very long road to get the streetcar underway, and we faced challenges every step along the way.

So it's only fitting that we'd launch passenger service on the eve of winter, and promptly have 40+ inches of snow and record low temperatures to contend with. We wouldn't want it any other way. So how did we DO?

Well, The Hop's November launch drew over 16,000 riders during its first two-and-a-half days. We exceeded our projected ridership for November by close to 25%, and we grew that number even more in December.

We're seeing great crowds on the weekends when we're attracting people to downtown to spend their money in the heart of the city, but we're also seeing more people riding during the week to commute to their jobs or homes.

When the snow came and temperatures plummeted, we kept right on going, maintaining service during the some of heaviest snow we've had in years.

As we look ahead, the question I hear most often is: where will it go next?

People want to know when The Hop will make it to their neighborhoods. By this time next year, we expect considerable progress on two critical extensions. The first, to our beautiful lakefront, is largely completed. We will close the loop on the lakefront extension and anticipate providing passenger service to the Summerfest grounds, art museum, and Discovery World next year.

We've also begun the design work on an extension to Bronzeville, which will travel up Vel R. Phillips Ave and provide important connections to the convention center, the Fiserv Forum and eventually, the Bronzeville neighborhood just to our north.

As our route grows, the economic impact of the streetcar will grow right along with it. Property values along the route are up nearly 28% since the project was approved in 2015, and we've seen example after example of developers letting the streetcar route inform their business decisions as to where they are going to move in the city.

Thanks to our great partner, Potawatomi Hotel & Casino, rides on the Hop have been free. Wherever you go on the route, you'll see energy and progress and a bright future for Milwaukee. Over the next several years, I will continue to focus on extending the economic vitality of downtown to neighborhoods throughout the city.

The Greater Milwaukee Foundation, The Milwaukee Urban League, LISC, and the Greater Milwaukee Committee have come together, promoting positive growth beyond the heart of the city. MKE United wants more residents to enjoy the benefits of downtown's economic success by promoting opportunity and investment in Milwaukee's neighborhoods.

In keeping with its mission, MKE United and its partners rolled out the Brew City Match to begin to revitalize our neighborhood commercial corridors and support local entrepreneurs. JP Morgan has already stepped up and invested \$3.5M through its Pro-Neighborhood grant to further support these efforts.

In the beautiful Garden District on the South Side, Alderman Terry Witkowski will partner with businesses and residents to host the first-ever "Howl on Howell". The street festival that will be held on June 1st. Mark your calendar.

On the national level, concerns about climate change have fallen by the wayside. That is not true in Milwaukee. I believe in science, so Milwaukee is leading by example. We have made

a commitment to get 25% of our electric power for city operations from renewable resources by the year 2025. This is an ambitious goal.

We are looking for as many opportunities as we can to rely on renewable and affordable energy. We are working with WE Energies and third parties to finance renewable energy systems on city buildings and in neighborhoods.

We've formed a partnership with Walnut Way and the Institute for Sustainable Communities to support local green jobs and have installed solar at four locations in the Lindsey Heights neighborhood including Wellness Commons, Alice's Garden and the Fondy Farmer's Market, in Alderman Russell Stamper's district.

Several Branch libraries will see greening of their outdoor public spaces and parking lots through storm water management. And, we're supporting new efforts to help Milwaukee Public Schools green up their buildings and schoolyards to help our kids grow up in a healthier environment. Alderman Michael Murphy launched MKE Plays, and that too is adding positive outdoor fun for our children.

As you can see I'm proud of the work city government performs. We continue to provide quality services to our residents and visitors to our city despite our very restricted ability to raise revenues. Unfortunately, our city budget will remain very very tight.

The costs are not going down for public safety, infrastructure, and basic quality-of-life services. I have often shared my concern that the entire city property tax levy is not enough to cover the police department budget. And now, it's not even enough to cover 94% of our police budget. State government has left us in a real jam in two major ways.

First, shared revenue has been frozen leaving us to pay 2019 bills with the same money we had in 2012. That's simply not sustainable. The second problem, as identified by the Wisconsin Policy Forum, is that Milwaukee is an outlier having only property taxes as its major source of local revenue.

We're not big spenders, a fact verified by national studies. That's why I am looking for a revenue source that allows us to meet our basic needs. After years of being ignored in Madison, we finally have reason to be hopeful.

I am grateful to Governor Tony Evers and Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes for addressing shared revenue in the recent budget. Governor Evers has proposed the first increase to shared revenue in a long time. Legislators, please make sure this item stays in the state budget. Thank you Lieutenant Governor Barnes for your leadership.

It has always been a priority for me to make sure everyone in Milwaukee matters---everyone counts. One year from now we will be fully engaged in encouraging participation in the Census. It's our opportunity that comes up every 10 years to make certain Milwaukee counts.

Not only do I want everyone to participate, but I want to engage Census partners throughout this City to coax and cajole, even insist that everyone participate. Director of Administration Sharon Robinson will lead our efforts just as she did in 2010. Maintaining Federal aid is critical and that's why every person counts. City government will be leading much of this work, and I want community partners and community groups to join us.

We will be asking the Faith-based Community to play a key role, and I appreciate their efforts not only on behalf of the Census but also the Cease-fire Sabbath and the Strong Baby sanctuaries.

Now, I have not mentioned something that may be on your mind...Wouldn't this be a great place for a national political convention?!

When I first came up with this idea back in 2013, the Fiserv Forum didn't exist and Milwaukee had a lot fewer hotel rooms. Fast forward six years, and we are ready to roar! But I don't have any news, only optimism, only optimism. I sure hope we hear good news soon.

The State of our City is stronger, safer, and offers more opportunity than times in the past. We have seen how united efforts can improve Milwaukee and that provides direction as we move forward.

Yes, a child born today will grow up in a city that addresses the challenges before it. I'm proud we are a city of strong partnerships. I'm proud that residents, neighborhood and community groups are vested in building a stronger Milwaukee.

I am enthusiastic and optimistic about our future: a future where every child is part of an inclusive, vibrant city that is thriving economically and culturally. I invite everyone to share my optimism and join us as we move Milwaukee forward!