

## State of the City 2018

We have come a long way...

So many said it couldn't be done...Yet here we are....

Today...we are in a new City...a growing city, one that is in the midst of an almost daily transformation...

We are a city of proud families, and neighborhoods with big hearts.

A City filled with diversity, with energy and with hope.

We are a city that has put aside its limitations and is embracing its possibilities.

Remember what it looked like from this window 12 years ago – it was a depressing site. Abandoned and boarded-up buildings dotted the street.

Our population was on the decline and people were leaving the city in droves.

But developers, investors and business owners all stepped-up, bet on Allentown and invested their time and money.

Our population has grown and stabilized because our residents, long-timers and newcomers, young and old, have found new confidence in our city.

But our city, like other cities is complex, composed of many parts all of which must work together if the entire machinery is to function correctly.

To adequately assess how well our city is doing one must look at each component part as it relates to the whole.

This is what I'm going to do this morning...outline for you the various parts of our city that make up this complex entity we call Allentown.

I'll show you how they are functioning and highlight those areas that we need to address if we are to continue to function properly.

The first component which is critical for the operation of our city is its finances.

A critical component in the operation of City, without proper funding the wheels of government come to a screeching halt.

Over the years I have striven to make government work for you, not against you...we did this by:

- Rebuilding our finances (turning deficits into surpluses)
- Improving our bond rating from a B- to an A+
- Using an innovative approach to fully fund our pensions (something no other city in the state or maybe even the country has accomplished...we won a national award for our creativity and ingenuity...Reducing our annual pension contribution by more than \$8 million dollars a year as recently reported by the auditor General

Eliminated the Per Capita Tax

And again in 2018 the citizens of Allentown will be seeing their thirteenth straight year of no property tax increases, thus providing predictability in our tax base.

Last year we spent nearly \$2 million less than budgeted in the General Fund for 2017, our Delinquent tax collection exceeded \$2.25 million (only \$22,000 short of all-time annual record)

In 2018 our baseline revenue will increase \$4M over last year's budget, we will finally implement options for making payments to the City electronically and begin a process of developing the first ever 311 center in the region.

*All this has been done through the amazing work of our Finance Director Brent Hartzell and his staff...please Stand...show your appreciation with a round of applause.*

The next component which is critical for the operation of our city is its infrastructure.

We're investing more and more in our infrastructure and putting more into our capital budget to fix what's broken in our city.

In 2017, Hamilton Street was repaved from Tenth Street to 15<sup>th</sup> Street.

Union Boulevard benefitted from a \$3.6 million project to repair and resurface the roadway in Allentown and Bethlehem.

We started a \$2.1 million project in the Upside Allentown neighborhood to repave, reconstruct or replace non-compliant sidewalk ramps and improve lighting by erecting lamp poles and assembling light fixtures, trenching cables and conduits and replacing street trees.

The state awarded \$1.07 million towards the American Parkway project which will light an 11,000 foot long section from Gordon Street to Airport Road.

And this month work will begin on a \$21 million reconstruction of the Tilghman Street Bridge over the Lehigh River.

We also....

- Purchased a new milling machine to increase paving miles while remaining within budgeted amounts and repaved an additional eight miles of city streets.
- We worked with UGI on cost sharing saving the City \$33,000 on paving projects
- Our city crews repaired 10,391 potholes
- Constructed 670 ADA ramps
- Installed 104 Pedestrian Streetlights (city contracts)
- Planted more than 200 street trees
- Installed 9,727 L.F. of Curbing and 64,000 S.F. of Sidewalk
- Removed and hauled over 790,000lbs (395 tons) of leaves off City streets.
- Emptied 54,000 litter baskets

Our Solid Waste and Recycling Bureau signed-up an additional 3,500 households for the city's new Recyclebank program, increasing the city's curbside Recycling by more than 800 tons.

The city also recycled 560 tons of paper and installed a new paper Shredding System which will be open to City residents and businesses in the 1st quarter of 2018.

Our Building Maintenance and Fleet Services replaced eight HVAC systems at various city buildings and maintained a fleet of 584 vehicles.

Finally, not all of the city's infrastructure is seen.... most is out of sight and mind.... but critically important to our city's operation and quality of life.

Hundreds upon hundreds of miles of pipes are under our streets, some dating back over 100 years....though we don't see them, they are critical in moving storm water from our streets and protecting our communities from flooding and our watershed from pollution.

After decade upon decade of deferred maintenance by past administrations our systems are in desperate need of repair.

We are attacking this issue head on with the help of City Council by approving a small fee to provide a specifically dedicated revenue stream for stormwater infrastructure improvements for years to come.

This year the Storm water division:

- Installed 31 new storm water inlets throughout the city.
- Rebuilt and repaired 236 aging storm water inlets
- Installed new storm pipe at Pennsylvania St., Baxter St. And 28th St.SW (Moravian to Lehigh St)
- Scoped and surveyed more than 60,000 feet of storm pipes for inspection
- Cleaned/vacuumed 740 storm inlets throughout the city; removed 19,456 cubic feet of debris from these inlets
- Inspected 213 outfalls to rivers and streams for DEP compliance.

With the new funds we will significantly increase and accelerate the replacement of decades old pipe protecting our neighborhoods from flooding, our watershed from pollution and comply with state and federal environmental requirements.

*All this work is being done by our Public Works department under the capable leadership of Craig Messenger and his staff (Please Stand) ...Please show them your appreciation with a round of applause.*

Another critical component for the operation of our city and our overall quality of life is our parks.

Public space is the common ground where people come together as friends, neighbors and citizens.

Places we share together—parks, squares, trails, community gardens—are the primary sites for human exchange, upon which our communities, economy, democracy and society depend.

People are not out in public spaces because they have to ....but because they want to—

It is the chance to have fun, hang out with other folks, and enjoy the surroundings.

There is not a single example of a city that rebuilt its public places with quality that has not seen a renaissance.

This is why we have invested so much in our parks since I took office. To date more than \$11 million dollars has been invested in our city parks since 2006, a significant investment in this tremendous city asset.

Last year:

- In February, the city was awarded a nearly \$300,000 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant for pedestrian safety improvements adjacent to the Allentown School District's Building 21.

The funds will also be used for the "Connecting our Community" MLK Parkway Trail, which connects the downtown to the city's western park resources.

- In May, the ribbon was cut to open the completely redesigned Stevens Park at Sixth and Tilghman streets. The more than \$650,000 project includes fully accessible playgrounds with poured in place safety surfacing for children ages 3 to 5 years and 5 to 12, a half basketball court, a stage, a new picnic pavilion complete with a food prep table, new walkways, seating, trees, landscaping and security cameras.
- Players on the City of Allentown's Lehigh Parkway Disc Golf Course are enjoying new concrete tee pads. In July, the City's Department of Parks & Recreation completed the installation of concrete tee pads on all 18 holes of the popular and beautiful course.
- In October we completed construction of Cedar Beach Pool, and hosted a preview weekend, attracting 1,240 patrons.
- Increased attendance at the Fishing in the Park inclusive fishing event from 499 to 645 in the fourth year of the event.
- Increased teams in the 2017 Summer Basketball League from 64 teams in 2016 to 80.

Thanks to a \$250,000 grant from the state we began a master planning process for Andre Reed Park and hope to secure additional funding for the pool and begin construction in 2019.

The City also received a \$25,000 grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program to prepare a Master Site Development Plan for Percy Ruhe Park on Oxford Drive.

The Master Plan would focus on renovating the park into a modern, full-scale athletic complex.

Allentown's first dog park will open this spring.

Located in Trout Creek Parkway near the intersection of Dixon Street and South Delaware Street, the \$125,000 project will include two pens on two acres, one pen for smaller dogs and one for larger dogs. The project is also the recipient of a \$25,000 grant from Pet Safe's Bark for Your Park program!

A final design of the planned \$1.3 million Skate Park at Jordan Park is expected this spring.

And in 2018 we will begin exploring the creation of a new community recreation center to provide enhanced programming for youth in our neighborhoods.

We are taking our parks and park infrastructure seriously in this city and will continue to in the future.

*All of this has been done under the leadership of our Parks and Rec Director Lindsey Taylor and Councilwoman Mota who heads-up our Parks and Recreation committee (please Stand).*

The next component for the operation of our city is Community and Economic Development.

The lifeblood of our city...its history and its culture...are found in our neighborhoods.

Allentonians deserve strong neighborhoods; neighborhoods that become stronger as the world keeps progressing into the 21st century; neighborhoods that lift up their people and in doing so lift up the whole city.

Yet Allentown is a City of contrasts.

We are home to some of the wealthiest people in the region and the largest concentration of the areas with the poorest residents.

With that, comes great responsibility.

Our health disparities are significant and we are challenged daily with addressing them.

In January, we were presented with a \$97,000 check from the Highmark Foundation to supports the city Health Bureau's efforts to attain public health department accreditation, which will advance quality and performance within the bureau and improve health outcomes for Allentown residents.

In May, it was announced that Allentown EMS received the American Heart Association's 2016 Mission: Lifeline® EMS Gold Plus Award for implementing quality improvement measures for the treatment of patients who experience severe heart attacks.

Our commitment to decreasing children's exposure to lead is stronger than it has ever been. Lead poisoning in Allentown is declining. We're making progress and we'll accomplish even more. We're raising awareness, and I'm confident our progress will continue.

Livability in our neighborhoods also means better housing and quality of life.

In April, the City of Allentown began offering qualifying landlords low interest loans to reduce the number of apartment units in their buildings.

The purpose of the program is to identify owners of from 2-8 unit rental properties and incentivize them to de-convert former single-family homes that have been converted to multiple residential unit uses.

The administration co-sponsored and City Council approved a Nuisance Abatement ordinance. Councilwoman Candida Affa is here this morning. Candida, thank you for spearheading that effort.

The measure creates a progressive point system for recurring violations at properties used for business, commercial, or industrial purposes that incur penalties, sanctions and the closure of operations after successive violations to protect the health, safety and welfare of our community residents.

Over 2,700 volunteers from Faith Church in Macungie came out for the 2017 Earth Day Clean up and significantly helped in cleaning our communities.

Our Sweep program this year under the direction of Tom Harper

- Issued 5,600 SWEEP tickets
- Addressed 1,450 Animal Control Complaints
- Removed 406 instances of graffiti

Allentown also launched a 311 Quick Reporter mobile app.

Through this new app, citizens are able to quickly report problems or observations through their mobile devices. The reports are delivered to city staff through the city's

GIS mapping system and reviewed and assigned to the appropriate agency for completion.

In March, Leonard Lightner was appointed director of the Department of Community & Economic Development. (Acknowledge Leonard)

In November, William Harvey was appointed Director of the Bureau of Building Standards and Safety.

These two men will be tasked this year with the job of creating a new program that will strengthen the city's commitment to stand up to predatory landlords who neglect their obligations to the City, who undermine our neighborhoods and who take advantage of individuals who rent from them.

These people hide their identities. They game the legal process and they ignore their basic human obligation to treat people decently.

But we are going to fight back.

We will take them to court and we will hold them responsible.

But improving the housing stock and commercial buildings isn't our only challenge in improving the quality of life for our residents.

The truth is, our people also need more than just a roof over their heads to live a good life.

To live a good life, you need a good job.

This is true for the individual standing in line at the Rescue Mission and the family living in West End.

In November, the City of Allentown's Neighborhood Improvement Zone was recognized as one of the top 13 projects of its kind in the world!

The Urban Land Institute awarded the NIZ a 2017-2018 Global Award for Excellence.

The awards program is designed to "identify and promote best practices in all types of real estate development."

Through partners like JB Reilly and City Center...we are seeing more than a billion dollars of new investment.

Projects like PPL Center, office buildings, apartments, the new restaurants, retail, a new luxury hotel...have become the catalysts of a new era...

- A million square feet of new office space
- New eateries
- New Housing.
- New parking, new open space.

This year we will see the construction of a new 18 story 350,000 sf. office building on 8<sup>th</sup> and Hamilton and the renovation of the former Holiday Inn on 9<sup>th</sup> and Hamilton.

All these projects are providing new economic momentum and creating jobs.

1,800 total new jobs in our downtown....64% of them filled by Allentown residents...creating a combined estimated economic impact of more than \$87.5 million.

In just three years ....our unemployment rate went down six points from 13.5% to 6.9%...that is lower than when I came into office in 2006.

All of that is great, but I don't want us to rest on laurels, as a city with high expectations, we should always focused on the road ahead.

The next front line in the battle is good paying jobs.

I want to see more employment by folks in our communities.

I want to see opportunities for better and higher wage jobs.

That is why I will be introducing a new initiative this year based on Milwaukee's Residents Preference Program.

This new certification initiative will be designed to promote the use of city residents as part of a contractor's or developer's workforce on certain city-funded construction and private development projects.

Contractors bidding on public works projects and development projects financed with public tax dollars will be required to hire a percentage of certified city residents to work on those projects.

I will be asking ANIZDA to implement this same requirement for all NIZ funded projects as well.

My hope is construction jobs occurring throughout the city will be an important lifetime step and an opportunity for better paying jobs...jobs that will finally allow people to know this is their city, not just today, but for decades to come.

So here is the goal we have set for ourselves.

The time is now for a new civic contract, a return to a city where living is easy, where opportunity abounds, and where we remember where we came from, how far we've come, or how far we've yet to go.

My hope is the private sector does a lot of other things that will increase the number of good jobs in the city. But I want you to know what we as a City are going to do.

Another significant component for the operation of our city is Public Safety.

Fighting crime and violence is a task that requires constant attention, resources and an "all hands on deck" approach. I can tell you the City is doing its part.

Beginning with these past three years, for the first time ever in the City's existence, the budget for the Allentown's police department exceeded the city's entire property tax levy.

Today, our police department budget is \$37 million which is \$7.4 million more than our entire property tax levy of \$29.6 million.

So as you can see, the City and the taxpayers are clearly committed.

Even more committed are the men and women who put their lives on the line every day.

In March of last year, I appointed Glen Dorney as our new police chief.

Glen succeeded Chief Keith Morris who retired from the city and accepted an offer to be the police chief at Penn State University.

Glen has been doing a tremendous job with the department. (Acknowledge Glen)

The Allentown Police Department increased its crime-fighting capability with a new app to help citizens connect with the department to find information, view alerts, and submit anonymous tips from their smartphone.

The Allentown PD app enables the public to share an anonymous tip with police and lets officers respond back to create an anonymous two-way conversation.

Allentown police began wearing body cameras effective November 1, making the city among the first to implement them in the Commonwealth.

The City of Allentown will be getting six additional police officers thanks to funding from the U.S Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

The Office announced in November that Allentown will receive \$750,000 over three years requiring a local match of about \$1.1 million.

Preventing crime in the first place is key to the safety of our residents and the stability of our neighborhoods. Yet among some people in our city, there is distrust of law enforcement.

So the Allentown police department is stepping-up its outreach in the community and giving those they reach something to remember them by through a program called Community Engagement 365.

The goal of the program is to have officers meet members of the community daily, on a non-call response instance, to simply meet and form a respectful relationship.

That encounter would be marked with a keepsake item or age relevant item bearing the insignia of the department and a slogan such as "Working Together to Build a Better Allentown."

By engaging our community during encounters such as this, the police can work together to establish bonds in our neighborhoods to build trust and mutual respect. Through these relationships, we can help reduce crime and increase neighborhood safety.

The keepsake item will be a token of that relationship and a daily reminder of the commitment of the department toward building positive, mutually respectful relationships with our community.

Think about it...If each officer working has a mutually respectful encounter with one member of the community each day, we can form thousands of these relationships each year.

This will help to change our neighborhoods for the better.

Also in 2018 we are investing in upgrading our fire-fighting fleet with the addition of two new pumpers. This will bring the total to nine new engines my administration has purchased since assuming office. (Acknowledge Chief Laubach)

The final and most significant component for the operation of our city is the community.

We are a diverse city, a city of many people and cultures. We draw our strength from that diversity.

Diversity is Allentown's greatest strength, not a weakness.

Our city is stronger when all of us come together, rather than live apart.

With this in mind we launched a new Cultural Community Center at Alliance Hall located on 6<sup>th</sup> and Chew streets.

Seven Allentown cultural groups are taking-up residency in the new center.

The Jamaican Cultural Organization, Liberian Community Association of Northeastern Pennsylvania, PuertoRican Cultural Preservation Inc., The Mexican Cultural Association, Dominican Cultural Organization, Indian American Association of the Lehigh Valley and Kenyan Community of the North East are taking-up residency in the building.

Until recently these groups had no place to call their own. They were meeting in household kitchens and living rooms across the city.

At Alliance Hall they each have small office space and access to a second floor commercial kitchen area where they can hold small events and joint meetings.

The cultural center also houses the city's new Office of Immigration where newcomers can go for help on a variety of immigration related concerns and receive assistance.

Our City Human Relations Commission will also be putting together workshops and educational materials for newcomers choosing to call Allentown their home.

Rose Thomas from the Jamaican Cultural Organization is the president of the new center's board and Jessica Ortiz the Chair of the Allentown Human Relations Committee are here today. (Ask them to stand)

Rose and Jessica, thank you for your service in helping to bring our diverse communities together.

Finally I'm extremely proud of the fact that the City of Allentown has earned a maximum 100 point score in the 2017 Municipality Equality Index (MEI) from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation.

The MEI examines how inclusive municipal laws, policies and services are of LGBTQ people who live and work there. Cities are rated based on non-discrimination laws, the municipality as an employer, municipal services, law enforcement and the city leadership's public position on equality.

This is what being an inclusive community is all about.

Allentown is a city with 120,000 stories – some tales of triumph and accomplishment, others of loss and sadness.

Think of a construction worker on a downtown site earning a good wage and supporting their family, or a student learning skills that will prepare him for a career in Allentown's new economy.

It's an artist, a family buying a first home, or an entrepreneur starting a business.

The state of our City is the sum of all these stories.

These stories show a city that is vibrant, alive and growing.

In the end, we will all be defined by our successes and how we faced our challenges.

We will be defined by how we, a city of immigrants, protect, respect, and provide opportunities to the women, men, and children who come here from all over the world.

In the end, Allentown's story will be determined by the work we do together to build our economy, to strengthen our neighborhoods, and to make this city a great place to call home.

Let's keep working.

Let us show all the naysayers what Allentown can be. Let's show them what we can do when we do it together...

Thank You