



State of the City

January 8, 2019

Good evening everyone and thank you for coming tonight. I want to thank President Noble and my colleagues of the Common Council for giving me the opportunity to share the State of the City. I also want to recognize our elected officials with us tonight.

In addition, I want to acknowledge the members of our local media reporting here tonight. You have always had a tough job, but now, more than ever, we need journalists.

About Growth

Our city is growing. And growth can sound scary sometimes. It might seem easier to remain still, to keep things the way they've always been. It may feel more comfortable to ignore new ideas and to be surrounded by people who look and think alike. But that's how cities crumble. We have far too much at stake to be lulled into complacency. Not when we've come this far. I believe wholeheartedly that we can continue to move forward while still holding on to all that makes Kingston special. Our city has strong roots- we were made to grow.

Smart growth is possible, especially in a city as capable and committed as Kingston. We have a diverse, creative and engaged community, eager to build a successful city where everyone can prosper. We're building new sidewalks, fixing underground utilities, improving our public transportation, creating socially responsible and progressive policies, preserving our historic assets, protecting our natural resources, and making the city's largest investment into quality housing in decades.

There is no doubt- the state of our city is strong.

Financial Management

We are entering 2019 in an excellent financial position. I am proud to have delivered a budget that lowers tax rates again for both residential and commercial properties for now the third year in a row. We continue to carry a robust fund balance and maintain an excellent credit rating. We were successful in negotiating fair, multi-year agreements with both CSEA and the Kingston Professional Firefighters Association and continue to work towards a positive resolution with the Police Benevolent Association.

I want to thank all of our department leadership who work with me each and every day to ensure that we are providing high quality services at the lowest possible cost. I also want to thank the

Common Council for supporting our 2019 budget and authorizing the resources we need to effectively serve the public. Finally, I want to thank our City Comptroller, John Tuey, for his sound guidance and unwavering commitment to the City's taxpayers.

Grants Management

One of the many ways we have been able to avoid raising taxes is by vigorously working to secure grant funding for a wide range of transportation, infrastructure, sustainability, public safety, and economic development projects. When I first took office in 2016, we were managing \$8.8 million in grant revenue. As of the end of 2018, I am proud to say that we are now managing a portfolio of approximately \$36.3 million in grants.

In order to continue to move projects along in a timely manner and secure additional resources in the future, I am establishing a new Office of Grants Management and expanding our staff. I want to thank the Common Council for supporting this critical expansion as part of the adoption of my 2019 Recommended Budget.

I also want to thank Kristen Wilson, who has worked tirelessly to balance our needs to secure grant funding and our commitment to moving projects forward. I am confident that under Kristen's leadership, our new Office of Grants Management will continue to help our city grow.

Downtown Revitalization Initiative

In 2018, we were thrilled to welcome Governor Cuomo back to the City of Kingston to announce the projects to be funded in the Uptown Stockade District by the Governor's Downtown Revitalization Initiative. A total of six projects will be funded by this record-breaking \$10 million award. In addition, the Governor approved our Strategic Investment Plan this year, which will now serve as a guide to advance all of the projects supported by our Local Planning Committee and community at large.

In 2019, we will be working to move one of the largest and most popular projects forward- a \$2.5 million investment into Dietz Stadium. Thanks to the overwhelming support of voters by public referendum, Kingston's Board of Education has been authorized to work with my administration on developing an agreement to transfer the ownership of Dietz Stadium to the City so we can access these funds and make critical improvements to the Stadium. I want to thank our Superintendent, Dr. Paul Padalino, for working with me on this important partnership. Once completed, I am confident that Kingston's students and our community as a whole will benefit tremendously.

We will also see significant movement on the development of The Kingstonian, a mixed-use project at the corner of Wall and North Front St. The State identified our public/private partnership with 'The Kingstonian' as one of the most significant economic development projects proposed in Kingston.

The DRI will also enable us to make major improvements to our transportation infrastructure, invest new funds into a grant and loan program for properties owners, and stabilize a historic asset on Frog Alley. In 2019, I will be coming to the Common Council with a proposal to preserve another key historic institution in Uptown identified during our DRI planning process-

the Volunteer Firemen's Museum. Built in 1857, the Wiltwyck Fire Station, as it was known at the time, hosted the first meeting of what would become the City of Kingston's Common Council. This local treasure is at risk of suffering irreversible structural damage if we do not act and I urge the Common Council in joining me to save this historic icon.

Housing and Community Renewal

While I am incredibly proud of all that we have accomplished together, the work is far from done. It's cold tonight. The wind is starting to pick up. The rain will soon turn to ice. And tonight, our homeless shelters are full. The Ulster County Warming Center could have up to 20 individuals seeking a place to sleep and a hot meal. Families from Kingston are scattered around Ulster County, crowded in motel rooms. At the end of this month, I will be volunteering during the annual Point in Time Homeless Count so I can gain a better understanding of the extent of homelessness among youth, adults and families in our city. I look forward to working with the Ulster County Continuum of Care to determine how my administration can be an effective partner in ending homelessness in our community.

I'm conscious of the fact that it is becoming increasingly harder to afford to live in our area. Rents are going up. Houses are selling for record-high prices. Opportunities for homeownership feel out of grasp for so many. In order to successfully address these complex issues, we need to develop a toolbox of policies, programs and partnerships. We've already made major progress through the development of the Kingston City Land Bank and I am pleased to report that in 2019, we will be transferring 36 properties to the Land Bank. With the support of donors through the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley, these 36 properties will be completely renovated, sold to first time homebuyers at an affordable price, and added back on the tax rolls. Just like 'Growth', 'Affordable Housing' can seem like another scary term. Depending on who you ask, Kingston either has too much affordable housing or not nearly enough. The fact is that we have a responsibility to ensure that our policies are consistent with our commitment to smart, equitable growth. In 2019, I will be working with the City of Kingston Human Rights Commission to develop a series of housing policy initiatives to be presented to the Common Council, as well as to the Ulster County Legislature. I am deeply concerned that we have people in our community being denied access to housing because of the source of their income. We have out of town landlords who have allowed their properties to deteriorate to the point that the buildings must be condemned and tenants are displaced. We see, time after time, tenants afraid to report any issues, for fear of losing their housing. We have found landlords who have used the immigration status of tenants as a way to intimidate them and raise the rents on their substandard apartments. These practices need to end. Access to safe and sanitary housing isn't negotiable. Affordable housing doesn't scare me. Knowing that some of my constituents- our neighbors- are at-risk of homelessness or displacement - that's what scares me. In 2019, we are going to advance meaningful, realistic strategies to ensure that each one of us can continue to call Kingston home.

Sustainability

In 2018, we continued our work to be a leader in sustainability, ultimately receiving the Silver Climate Smart Community certification, the highest level achieved by any municipality in New

York State. Notable accomplishments this year include the installation of three electric vehicle charging stations in municipal parking lots, the expansion of our “clean fleet” through the purchase of three additional electrical vehicles, and the completion of both a Natural Resources Inventory and a Street and Park Tree Inventory.

In 2019, we will continue to advance our efforts towards protecting our natural resources and building a stronger community, with a focus on open space planning, waterfront resiliency and adapting to sea level rise and flooding. Some of the major initiatives planned for 2019 include:

- Retrofitting all street and park lights to LED, as well as interior lights at 12 municipal buildings
- Completing Kingston’s Open Space Plan
- Retrofitting City Hall’s Storm Windows
- Installing two new Electric Vehicle Public Charging Stations
- And completing our municipal composting study

I want to thank our hardworking staff, who are quite literally trying to save the world. I also want to thank our Environmental Education and Sustainability Coordinator, Julie Noble, whose remarkable vision for a sustainable and resilient community can inspire us all to do better.

Parks and Recreation

In 2018, our Parks and Recreation Department continued to provide high quality programming, while maintaining our City’s 150 acres of beautiful parkland. With 11 parks, three community centers, a riverfront beach, a community pool and our beloved Nature Center, it’s no surprise that our parks system continues to attract thousands of visitors each year. Nearly 7,000 were served just in our registered programs alone!

In 2019, we will be moving forward with a \$100,000 capital investment plan to enhance our beautiful parks. Improvements slated for this year include new amenities at Kingston Point, Barmann Park, Hutton Park and our popular Kingston Dog Park.

I want to thank all of our staff who work to preserve our incredible parks system and offer wonderful programs to our children, adults, families and senior citizens. I also want to thank our Department’s Superintendent, Kevin Gilfeather, who taught me a long time ago that the best leaders are those who empower others to grow.

Arts, Health and Quality of Life

One of the things I am most proud of is that we consistently go beyond providing basic services and work to improve the quality of life for all of our community members. By supporting the arts, we create community and stimulate economic growth. By creating healthy opportunities, we increase productivity and save health care costs. As an example, our Live Well Kingston Commission, under the leadership of Emily Flynn, is pulling together isolated organizations to align goals, share resources, learn best practices and discover gaps in services.

In 2018, our new Director of Arts and Cultural Affairs, Addie Farr, joined our team as a fierce advocate for enhancing the City’s support and recognition of local artists, organizations and

businesses who contribute to our city every day. She has reinvigorated our gallery space on the ground floor, welcoming new and established artists to showcase their work. This office has also played a critical role in bringing to light the challenges our local artists continue to face. In 2019, I look forward to working with the Kingston Arts Commission, the Midtown Arts District, the O+ Festival and other partners to ensure that our government is a resource for local artists to thrive.

By working together and leveraging resources, we have also been able to make a significant impact on addressing the health and well-being of our local children. I am pleased to report that our Parks and Recreation Department facilitated a complete overhaul of the kitchen at the Hodge Center on Franklin St. This upgrade enabled our partners at Family of Woodstock to prepare and distribute nearly 8,000 hot meals to children this past summer at sites throughout the City, including the Hodge Center, Kingston Library, Read and Write, A.J. Williams-Myers African Roots Library, Community Action, the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club and Center for Creative Education. The kitchen is now preparing 175 meals every day after school to provide dinner to children at the Hodge Center, Rondout Center and Boys and Girls Club. Together, we can work to ensure that no child in Kingston goes hungry.

Public Safety

Kingston Police Department

In 2018, the brave men and women of the Kingston Police Department responded to thousands of calls for service ranging from motor vehicle accidents, to disputes, to property damage, to personal welfare checks. Our sworn officers respond to individuals in their most vulnerable moments and it is truly remarkable the level of care and compassion they demonstrate on a daily basis in what is often the most difficult of circumstances.

Our Kingston Police Commission worked with department leadership and the community to adopt a series of key policies in 2018 including the Right to Know Act, procedures for Body Worn Cameras, and strategies to attract more diverse applicants to our police force, resulting in the hiring of a full-time bilingual police officer.

In 2019, our Department will continue to build stronger community relations by working with the Center for Creative Education, the Kingston City School District, community organizations, and local youth on the newly established Peaceful Guardians Project.

I want to thank the members of the Kingston Police Department for their dedicated service and Chief Tinti for his strong and sound leadership.

Kingston Fire Department

In 2018, the Kingston Fire Department responded to over 5,000 calls, including 8 multiple alarm fires. The Department increased its people power with four new firefighters, thanks to our recently secured SAFER grant. We were also able to make major improvements and additions to our equipment, including the arrival of a brand new Tiller Ladder truck and the purchase of a new Engine 1.

In 2019, we will be purchasing a second set of turnout gear for all of our firefighters, significantly reducing their exposure to harmful carcinogens.

I want to thank the members of the Kingston Fire Department for their everyday acts of heroism and to our Chief, Mark Brown, for his commitment to the safety and well-being of all City residents.

Public Works and Engineering

In 2018, staff of the Department of Public Works worked to keep our City running smoothly.

- We Paved 13 Streets and put down 6,680 tons of blacktop
- We cleaned and repaired approximately 150 catch basins and repaired 78 manholes
- We took the first steps in repairing a longstanding and worsening sink hole on Henry Street, including replacing the storm sewer line and re-stabilizing the road, with more work to be done on this project this year.
- We collected over 7,800 tons of refuse and collected over 1,700 tons of recycled materials

And as we all know, 2018 was a rough winter, with our Department responding to 22 winter storms. We can only hope that this winter cuts us a break.

We also advanced some incredible transportation projects. With the support of the Department of Public Works, City Engineer, and Grants Manager, as well as volunteers from the Kingston Land Trust, we were able to complete the first phase of the Hasbrouck-Delaware Parklet. And our Kingston Point Rail Trail is finally under construction and is set to open to the public later in 2019!

We were fortunate to add a number of talented new members to our leadership team this past year, including our new City Engineer, John Schultheis, our new Superintendent of Public Works, Ed Norman, and Deputy Superintendent Ryan Coon. We greeted their arrival with a huge list of projects. It will be all hands on deck as we usher in Kingston's most substantial investments in infrastructure in decades.

Some of the major projects planned for 2019 include:

- Paving 15 streets
- Completing the Jacob's Valley Storm Sewer Replacement Project, which will address the frequent flooding we see at the underpass on Broadway.
- We will be designing and contracting with funding agencies for major sidewalk replacements and ADA curb cuts on Franklin St. and Henry St.
- We're going to be paving Hurley Avenue
- We're also going to be improving sidewalks along Cornell St. adjacent the municipal
- We will be working with the community to transition from single stream to dual stream recycling
- And we will be advancing the Broadway Streetscape Project- a multimillion dollar overhaul of the Broadway corridor, which will include brand new ADA-compliant sidewalks, coordinated traffic lights, new crosswalks, a protected bike lane, and a newly paved Broadway. This project will be going out to bid in 2019.

NYS Assemblymember Kevin Cahill continues to be a true champion of the City of Kingston. Thanks to his leadership, the Wurts Street Bridge reconstruction will get off the ground in 2019. A nearly \$32 million investment in our City's infrastructure, this historic bridge will be completely repaired and replaced by the Fall of 2021 and is fully funded by the NYS DOT, costing the Kingston taxpayers nothing. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Assemblyman Cahill for his devotion to our community and I look forward to working with him on major upcoming projects this year. Thank you, Kevin.

Comprehensive Plan and Zoning

I have an old friend who often says 'If you don't have good policy and process, you don't have anything at all.' In 2018, we spent a great deal of effort working to address serious issues in our zoning ordinance, including a long-standing and problematic gap in excavation permit requirements and inconsistencies in the City Code for our Zoning Board of Appeals. Recently, I released a call for volunteers to serve on a task force to help us modify our zoning code so that it is aligned with our Comprehensive Plan. The efforts of this task force will dovetail with a new initiative we are working on with Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress to create a Strategic Action Plan for the roughly 250 goals, objectives and strategies identified in our Comprehensive Plan.

Growing Partnerships

Kingston is fortunate to have an extensive network of community partners working to improve the quality of life of our residents. People want to live and do business in communities that support healthy, responsible and equitable growth. We're seeing incredible investments in core areas, including education, social justice, recreation, health, transportation and housing. In 2018, we celebrated the completion of the first phase of Kingston High School's \$137 million renovation and expansion. The classrooms in that school sure look a lot nicer than when I went there. Students today will be afforded the facility and technology they need to learn and thrive. I am also pleased to report that Health Alliance is proceeding with its \$92 million investment into Midtown with a high tech hospital campus on Mary's Avenue and a Medical Village on Broadway. In addition to dramatically improving access to quality healthcare, these facilities will drive smart economic development and bring jobs that pay a living wage.

RUPCO's Energy Square is another example of the innovative and forward-thinking projects I am excited to see come to fruition in the next year. Energy Square will take a vacant property on Cedar Street and adapt it into a 57-unit apartment building with 11,000 square feet dedicated to civic space to house the Center for Creative Education. It will be the Hudson Valley's first Net-Zero affordable housing development, creating jobs and doubling the tax revenue for the existing space. It is projects like these that move the City forward, while ensuring the quality of life for all people of Kingston.

We also welcomed Ulster County's Restorative Justice and Community Empowerment Center to Midtown. This project, along with the in-development Linear Park and the SUNY Ulster Satellite campus established at the former Sophie Finn School, is a stark reminder of the thoughtful and innovative solutions our County Executive Mike Hein has created in our community. It's clear that while Mike is moving on to a new opportunity in Albany, his legacy will remain forever with Kingston.

It's been a good year for Kingston. It is a privilege to serve as your Mayor. For those of you who have lived and invested in Kingston during our most challenging times- thank you. To those of you who have recently joined our community- welcome. I am confident that you will find that everyone has a place here in Kingston. This is my home. It's yours; and yours; and yours too. Let us continue to grow together, lifting one another up so we may reach higher than we ever dreamed possible.

Thank you and goodnight!