



**2017 State of the City
Mayor Steven T. Noble**

Good evening. I want to thank you all for joining us tonight for what I am confident will be another fine example of democracy in action. While I appreciate the opportunity to share with you what I believe are a number of significant accomplishments we have achieved together, tonight, just like any other night, is about the work. Following this annual message, the Common Council will resume its regular business, starting with an opportunity for public comment. It is this mechanism- this opportunity in which any individual can independently and respectfully express their support, opposition or general thoughts on city matters- that ensures your elected officials hear you. For those of you who showed up tonight to support a memorializing resolution I proposed reaffirming our great city as a welcoming and inclusive community- thank you. For those of you who showed up tonight to oppose this memorializing resolution- I want to thank you as well. If one of our greatest achievements will be to have created an environment in which the public is welcomed and engaged in the decision-making process of its local government, then I know we will have done right. While it is uncomfortable to hear opinions or views that are in such great conflict with our own, it is how we handle this conflict and how we treat those with whom we are in conflict that defines who we are as a community. I believe that tonight, just like any other night, Kingston will shine.

This year, some of our most challenging issues transcended the boundaries of our small city and reflected a greater divide of philosophy and values in our nation. Questions of gun control or immigration, both of which are long-standing, divisive topics that have yet to be resolved on the national level, entered into our daily conversations with our neighbors and friends. We eventually updated our City's firearms law and are now considering a memorializing resolution to reaffirm the City of Kingston as a welcoming and inclusive community for all, including immigrants- something that has never been done before in our community. These have not been easy topics to broach and deliberate. Even our discussions around parking fees, an issue that most cities must grapple with, have delved into important questions of fairness and equity.

However, the fact that our community members hold such conflicting and opposing values from each other reminds me that Kingston is indeed a diverse community. It is my responsibility as your Mayor to ensure that each of you, regardless of our differences, is heard.

As we reflect upon our successes and challenges of 2016, I am more confident than ever before that we are moving forward. As you will see from the annual report that will be posted on our website this week, our departments are providing an incredible variety of essential public services.

A glimpse into our successes

Economic Development

In early 2016, I made the decision to bring together our offices of Economic and Community Development into one department and increase the capacity of that department so that the City could more systematically and effectively secure and manage its grant resources. As a result, the City of Kingston achieved a record \$3.3 million in grant awards from the highly competitive NYS Consolidated Funding Application. These grant awards are in addition to the \$564,500 in new grant funding secured this year and the \$9 million the office managed of existing grant funding, as well as another \$1.4 million in Community Development Block Grant funding.

In order for our City to achieve and sustain a thriving economy, we must continue to explore public and private partnerships. Our efforts to secure major grant funding in the areas of infrastructure, transportation, housing and sustainability, along with appropriate policy changes, lay the groundwork for private investment. The City made great progress in these efforts with the adoption of the new comprehensive plan, which I see as a roadmap to Kingston's future. My administration is working to ensure that all future development and economic growth initiatives are aligned with this comprehensive plan.

In 2016, I proposed and was supported by the Kingston Local Development Corporation board to establish a Micro Enterprise Loan program to assist new and expanding small business ventures. This was in addition to an expansion of the target area of the KLDC's façade program, which now accepts applications from businesses throughout the City wishing to improve their façades.

This year also marked the official launch of the Kingston Midtown Arts District, which includes a variety of artists, small business owners and residents committed to ensuring that the arts are embraced by the City. I was also proud to support the City in becoming a co-sponsor of the annual Made in Kingston event, which features entrepreneurs, small business owners, makers and artists from throughout our area.

Infrastructure

We have made excellent strides in addressing our aging infrastructure. Major projects have included the Combined Sewer Separation Project at Broadway and Grand Street, the removal of the deteriorating Greenkill Avenue Bridge, the reconstruction of the North Front St. parking lots, and the reopening of Washington Avenue following a five year disruption in service. While these infrastructure projects often required significant changes in traffic patterns, thanks to the patience of our community and the hard work of our staff and contractors, our infrastructure is stronger and more resilient.

Public Safety

In 2016, both our Kingston Police Department and Fire Department provided critical emergency services to our community members in their most vulnerable moments. The Kingston Fire Department responded to 5,044 calls, including 20 incidents of resuscitation efforts due to cardiac arrest or overdose. The Kingston Police Department, while navigating high pressure

situations and investigating serious crimes, received approximately 26,000 dispatched to service calls.

Public Works

Our Department of Public Works is keeping Kingston on track. Just in refuse and recycling alone, the Department provided incredible services throughout the City. In the last year, over 7,100 tons of refuse was collected and over 2,000 tons of materials recycled, saving taxpayers over \$215,000. As we've seen, this Department does not stop, regardless of the weather or the extent of work required. We can go about our daily lives because of their efforts to ensure that we have a clean and productive environment to live and work in.

Communication

When I first announced my candidacy for Mayor, I made a commitment to change the way our government communicates. I strongly believe that if we are not clear, we are not properly serving the public. Each of you should know what my administration is doing to advance our city. That is a mandate that I feel passionately about and one in which I will continue to strive to reach. Since I entered into office, the public continues to raise the bar. That's good. The public is expecting and demanding more than ever before and it should. Communication isn't just about distributing press releases or making headlines. It's about building trust and respect in the community and supporting the public to get actively involved in the decisions being made on their behalf. Whether it is with residents, business owners, members of the media or other elected officials, I will continue to communicate clearly, professionally and with the utmost respect.

Recreation

As most of you know, before assuming the role of Mayor, I had the great honor of working in the City's Parks and Recreation Department. It was through this work that I had the opportunity to work with an excellent team of dedicated employees eager to make Kingston a better place for our children, adults and seniors. We worked to build programming that not only showcased our amazing network of city parks, but improve the lives of our participants. Noting this, I am very proud of the work this Department did this past summer, with support from the Community Development Block Grant, to provide a free summer parks program experience for nearly 100 children from our Rondout Neighborhood Center and Everette Hodge Community Center after school programs. In addition to connecting these children to a summer parks experience that was previously unattainable, the City partnered with the Kingston City School District to provide free, nutritious lunches for any children in the parks program in need.

Budgeting

I am very proud of the work we collectively did to prepare the 2017 budget. For the first time, members of the community were provided with opportunities to directly participate in the budget process. This included an online budget survey, a community forum, and multiple Council Committee meetings. In a time when other communities exceeded the NYS tax cap, we lowered taxes. We made significant progress in addressing the homestead/non-homestead inequities. We allocated \$500,000 in contingency for the settlement of contracts and unanticipated expenditures. We built a sound budget that preserved essential services, avoided layoffs and gave us the tools to respond to the ever evolving needs of our City.

Moving Kingston Forward

I am incredibly optimistic that the groundwork we have laid in 2016 will bring to bear the tools and resources we need to be successful moving forward. In 2017:

We will continue to build a stronger tax base

After a competitive public process and interviewing extremely qualified applicants, I am pleased to announce that we will be working with local architect, Andrew Wright, of Wright Architects to develop the old parking garage site in Uptown Kingston. As we know and have discussed at length, Uptown Kingston needs additional parking infrastructure. In order to meet this need and, more broadly, to develop this property into a mixed use site with a public parking garage that will complement the retail and housing resources already in place, my administration will be working with Wright Architects to meet strict milestones over the next year and a half. In the first 6 months, Wright Architects will create schematics for the site. Within 12 months, it is expected that they will bring investors to the table on this project. Finally, in 18 months, it is expected that a site plan will be ready to submit to the Planning Board for review.

My administration will also be working to support developers to responsibly build additional market rate, senior and affordable housing throughout Kingston. Finally, the Office of Economic and Community Development will continue to provide support services to new and expanding businesses in the City.

We are going to build a sustainable Kingston

We are going to strive to be the first city in New York State to be recognized as a “Clean Energy Community”. The Council is considering a resolution tonight to move this effort forward and I thank them for this consideration and support.

We are going to continue to add alternative fuel vehicles to our fleet, moving closer towards our goal of transitioning 20% of our fleet to alternative vehicles by 2020, as per our Climate Action Plan.

In 2017 we will also commence work on our LED lighting project.

We will be conducting a Natural Resource Inventory, which will allow us to plan for future growth. This inventory is vital for planners and developers to understand where sensitive habitats exist. Finally, we will be preparing our Open Space Plan. This is critical to ensure that we have the necessary green space for future generations to come. As an environmentalist, a local leader, and above all, a father, building a sustainable community for our children remains a top priority.

We are going to address housing issues and work to ensure that all residents live in safe, quality housing.

Through the hiring of an additional code enforcement officer, we will enforce the City’s new “Zombie Property” law and crack down on vacant and abandoned buildings, reducing the negative impact of these buildings on surrounding properties. We will also build off of our 2016 efforts of establishing a Land Bank to further address vacant properties causing blight in our community. We will work with the Office of Corporation Counsel to more quickly move surplus properties back onto the tax roll through an auction process beginning this spring. Finally, we

will work closer with the Kingston Housing Authority's Board to ensure the KHA is providing the affordable, high quality housing our residents need and deserve.

We are going to change the way people move around

In 2017, we are launching a comprehensive transportation strategy we are calling "Kingston on the Move"

My administration's vision for Kingston's transportation systems is about moving and connecting people to places.

When I think of our future transportation, this is what I see:

I see a City of Kingston that is an easily accessible community, connected by a reliable and simple-to-use transportation system which supports all individuals to move about safely and efficiently. Kingston's system will be based on one simple premise- transportation is about helping people move forward. This transportation system will support users to enjoy the path to their destinations by providing a seamless transition from motorized to non-motorized transportation options, allowing users to effortlessly move throughout the City.

In 2017, we will be working to move this vision closer to reality. We will:

Launch an online transportation grant portal to allow citizens an opportunity to view the purpose and current status of all transportation grants. The site work has already begun and can be followed at www.kingston-ny.gov/KingstonOnTheMove

Our Kingston Point Rail Trail and Hudson River Promenade Projects will go out to bid, bringing us another step closer to construction.

I believe strongly that our public transportation system needs to be changed and my administration is committed to working with Ulster County to make this happen. We are actively involved in the Ulster County Transit Integration Study which is currently evaluating the feasibility merging our Citibus operations with the Ulster County Area Transit.

With \$1.4 million in grant funds recently awarded for our Broadway Streetscape Project, our goal of changing the look and functionality of this outdated thoroughfare is moving forward. While there are many moving parts to this project, we expect to be unveiling final designs of the project this February.

My administration is committed to ensuring all of our community members can access our services and infrastructure, regardless of ability. In 2017, we are launching our new ADA Transition team, which will be working to document barriers to accessibility throughout our city and develop short term and long term plans to address these deficiencies.

Finally, as part of our "Kingston on the Move" Transportation Strategies, we will continue our efforts to redesign and upgrade our parking management systems. As I've recently announced, a workgroup of residents, business owners, employees, elected officials and other stakeholders will be formed to further develop our parking plans.

We are going to continue to build a stronger city workforce

Much of my time this year has been spent on redefining the City's management and supervision structure and supporting my staff to establish and meet well-defined goals and expectations. In 2017, we will work to negotiate 3 expired union contracts. We will expand our recruitment strategies to continue to diversify our workforce with well-qualified applicants. We will also work to develop a work order system that manages the workflow of our city departments and allows the public to submit and follow work requests online or through a hotline and monitor the progress of their requests until completion. Finally, we will implement an advanced time and attendance system for all city employees.

We are going to build an open and accessible government

We will be establishing fiscal transparency and open data tools on the City's website to share this data with the public. I will be establishing a Committee on Open Government to advise my administration on strategies, best practices and tools to support our open government principles. Finally, we will implement a new workflow and agenda management system to improve the availability and timeliness of committee agendas and minutes on the City's website.

We are going to bring together partners to improve public health

As a founding member of the Live Well Kingston coalition, I am well aware of the negative impacts obesity and other chronic illnesses can have on our community. I am committed to bringing together community partners to further our wellness efforts and establish the Live Well Kingston Commission. I have sent a request to the Council to establish this Commission and look forward to their consideration.

As you can see, we have a lot of work ahead of us. It's hard for me to think that just a year ago I was standing here reciting my oath and committing to serve all of you. I find myself, even a year later, humbled by this incredible responsibility. It has been a challenging, but fulfilling year and I am looking forward to seeing what we can get accomplished together in the year ahead.

I know that there is a lot of fear in this world; it's a deep, palpable sensation that has the power, if we allow it, to harm our community by inspiring anger, blame and mistrust. We cannot change the world but I assure you that by working with our neighbors instead of against them, we can build a far more resilient city. I ask that each of us make a commitment: instead of being the loudest voice in a room- listen. Instead of offering an ultimatum- find common ground. Instead of pushing people down- lift each other up. These are not the values of a democrat or a republican. These are the principles of a community that is capable of overcoming adversity and defining its own future.

As we join together to tackle the opportunities and challenges that await us in 2017, I want to thank my staff, members of the Common Council and all of you for helping us move Kingston forward.