

**State of the City
Friday, April 6, 2018
CAM, 409 W. Martin Street**

Good evening and thank you for being here tonight.

I would like to thank Dexter Wimberly for his kind introduction, and Gab Smith, Executive Director here at CAM for once again hosting my State of the City Speech. It means a great deal to be both a part of our monthly First Friday events, and to be here at CAM. They both speak to how much the arts are a part of our lives here in Raleigh.

I would also like to thank our communications staff at the City of Raleigh for helping to put this event together, and to my friends that are live streaming this on Facebook, for even more people to see.

We have had a very busy year here in Raleigh. And I think one of our best.

In the last few months we have heard lots of news, stories and opinions bantered about. This year, I am going to make sure that we all know about the “real news” so no one gets confused with any “fake news” that they might have heard.

We know that we made lots of “Best of” lists last year.

In fact, we have already made 3 in 2018:

- #4 Highest % of Workforce in STEM
- #2 Best-Performing Large Metro Areas
- #2 Housing Markets for 2018

Last year we received honors such as:

- #2 Best Big City to Live in from Money Magazine
- #2 Tech Hub that Millennials Prefer to Silicon Valley from Forbes
- #1 Large City for First-Time Homeownership
- #3 Best City for Making a Fresh Start
- #4 Best Place to Live- from US News and World Report
- #10 Best US City for Closing the Gender Equality Gap
- #4 Best City for Jobs- from USA Today
- There are about 60 more, but one of my favorites is:

TOP 12 MOST EXCITING FOOD CITIES!!

We are so fortunate to have so many incredible chefs here in Raleigh.

I'm sure you all heard that the James Beard nominations were just announced and our own Ashley Christensen was nominated for the James Beard Award for the Country's Outstanding Chef! Brewery Bhavanna was nominated for the Best New Restaurant in the Country and Cheetie Kumar has not only been included in the James Beard nominations for the past 2 years, but her restaurant, Garland, is where Robert Plant went after his concert to eat and I hear he sang to her.

Yes, we are most definitely an exciting food city.

And, we are a city of the Arts.

When I first got on city council in 2007, I asked to be the liaison to the Arts Commission. I found that there are so many dedicated people in our city that believe that the arts not only enrich our lives, but then define us.

And, we firmly believe that they are a strong economic driver. And we are right!

In 2010, the economic impact of the arts and culture industry here was over \$143 million dollars. Just five years later, in 2015, the economic impact has been more than \$531 million dollars. As we continue to see more and more growth in the arts, we will benefit on so many levels.

I am excited to see us grow into our goal of being known as the Southern Capital of Arts and Culture!

Arts weren't the only impact on our economy.

Last year, 77 businesses announced new locations or expansion creating 3760 new jobs and \$13.65 million of investment.

We issued 132 permits for new commercial construction with associated investments totaling more than \$460 million.

The economic impact of Tourism was substantial, too. 2016 is the last year we have final numbers for, but Wake County had 15.6 million visitors who generated \$2.4 billion in direct spending. By generating \$242 million in 2016 tax revenues, those visitors saved each Wake County Household \$663.

The Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau, with a budget of \$7.1 million, was directly responsible for a direct economic impact of \$140.2 million for Wake County.

Of course, we all love the Bluegrass Festival. In 2017 we had a record-breaking attendance of over 220,000 with the events generating \$11.7 million in direct economic impact. And that does not include what the local people spend.

Not only is tourism important for the dollars that it brings to our city, but also for the jobs that it creates. Tourism employs 25,353 full time positions with a payroll of \$715.3 million. There continues to be a high demand for hospitality jobs. Therefore, the Raleigh Convention Center partnered with the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau, Capital Area Workforce Development, and the N.C. Restaurant and Lodging Association to hold the Wake County Restaurant and Hotel Job Fair on March 28.

This is the area's first job fair held specifically for the hospitality industry and we hope to make it an annual event. I heard this morning that they are working with Wake Tech to take people from homelessness to employment in the hospitality industry.

We recognize that helping our citizens find the path to employment is so important to make sure that our thriving economy reaches all of us.

That is why we recently opened our Pathways Center at 900 S. Wilmington St.

About 2 years ago, I was contacted by the Obama White House about Raleigh becoming a Tech Hire City. Tech Hire is a program that was born out of the My Brother's Keeper program. My Brother's Keeper was focused on African-American males, between the ages of 18-24 that were having a difficult time entering the workforce.

That program evolved into Tech Hire, a program aimed at helping those people that were trying to find jobs, but did not have the exposure to those tech skills required for almost every job today.

Tech Hire looks different in every city. We applied and received the designation, and set to work on what would help our community the most.

We partnered with Capital Area Workforce Development, our IT department and Wake Tech to develop our first class, IT Beginnings. IT Beginnings targets young adults age 18-24 who have little or no technical training for a 12-week program that provides participants the opportunity to earn an industry recognized IT credential and learn valuable leadership and job skills.

We also have industry partners that will be working with our graduates to expose them to the workplace.

As the program grows, we plan to add more advanced classes. IT Beginnings can serve as a pathway into further training at Wake Tech, or into a job, with the help of our dedicated staff at The Pathways Center.

In addition to Raleigh TechHire programs, The Raleigh Pathways Center houses the youth services division, including Partnership Raleigh a public-private partnership between the City of Raleigh and the local business community to employ young adults who live in Raleigh.

We have also located our Summer Youth Employment program and YouthBuild Raleigh, a program that provides training and construction skills while obtaining a GED for those that have that need.

We are working hard to make sure that all of Raleigh's citizens have the opportunity to share in our city's success.

We know that our success is not felt equally by everyone. But often, we don't do a very good job of telling the story of what we are doing for the community; of promoting programs like TechHire, or our grants that are available to small business owners such as the Business Upfit Grant, or the JobsRaleigh Grant.

We are striving for equity in everything we do, and we recognize that it is a challenge that isn't solved in a day.

I was recently at an event at the Raleigh Museum, along with former mayors Smedes York and Charles Meeker, former School Superintendent Bill McNeil and John Kane. We talked about decisions made in the past that contributed to our success.

The decision to merge the city and county school systems in 1972 was mentioned over and over during the night. Especially because after it failed to get the support of the public in a referendum, the city and county leaders made the decision to go ahead. They knew it was the right thing to do. They knew that segregated schools were not the future for Raleigh and Wake County. It is that kind of wisdom and strength that has helped to shape the successful city that we are.

Now, Raleigh is at a place that we again have to make some hard decisions.

It seems that our secret is out and everyone is moving here. Growth is a good thing because a city is either growing or it's dying. There is no status quo.

So what decisions do we make to keep the Raleigh that we love while we wrestle with all of those issues that accompany growth?

Keeping up with infrastructure- everything from supply and quality of our drinking water to maintaining our wastewater system - is vital to accommodating growth. We are currently making capacity improvements in the Crabtree Creek Basin Area of our wastewater collection system. This \$72 million project will provide a long-term solution for anticipated growth in the area, and help prevent sanitary sewer overflows, protect surface area waters and the environment.

We are making road improvements to accommodate the increasing traffic while planning to implement a new transit plan.

This plan will include Bus Rapid Transit in key corridors to help people move more easily through the City. We will also see increased bus routes with 15-minute headways, to allow for ease and predictability in use.

Union Station is a cornerstone of Raleigh's public transportation future. The first phase of the project is nearly complete, and we will be opening later this spring. The multimodal center is designed to support current and future demand for rail and transit service in our City.

Transit is a key part of affordability. When we talk about housing affordability, it is more than just the price that you pay for housing each month. The ability to access work, school, medical care, and day care, all of your needs without the need to purchase a car is a key piece of affordability.

How do we manage housing affordability? It's a matter of supply and demand. If we have a million-people coming here and we don't have a million places for them to live, then those places are more expensive.

It is imperative that we address this issue with our partners, and we have many. The Raleigh Housing Authority, Wake County, the State of NC and private partners, such as Downtown Housing Improvement Corporation, or DHIC. We also have a group of developers working with the Urban Land Institute to develop a toolbox that will help us work with private partners to provide more affordable housing.

Affordable Housing includes everything from housing vouchers to housing the disabled to workforce housing.

I am looking forward to a summit to be open to the public that all of our partners are working on to be hosted by the Urban Land Institute. This will be a great opportunity to hear about what we are doing, what we can and cannot do and how we can partner in new and creative ways to produce more affordable units.

This month, the City will be committing to projects that total over 1,000 affordable rental units.

At a recent meeting of the Housing and Neighborhoods Committee of the Raleigh City Council, a representative of the state said that Raleigh is doing it the best. We are using all of the tools available to us, in the best way, so I'm looking forward to learning about new tools that we can utilize, such as accessory dwelling units, as we face this difficult issue.

So here is your take away.

This is a big issue. We are working hard and dedicating resources to it.

When someone says, “Raleigh’s not addressing the issue of affordable housing”, I want you to look at them and say, “That’s just not true.”

Do we need to do more? Absolutely.

Every growing city in the country is wrestling with this issue. But rest assured, we are focused and dedicated to working to make housing affordable in the City of Raleigh.

We make decisions that affect Raleigh today, tomorrow, 5 years, 15 years, and 50 years away.

Sometimes it’s investing millions of dollars underground, to maintaining and updating the miles and miles of water, sewer and storm water pipes. An investment in our future that you don’t see.

Sometimes it’s investing in those things above ground, like Dix Park. Dix Park is an investment that will return dividends to our city for generations.

We are currently in the Master Planning Process. There has been input from thousands of citizens in every form from events in the park, to gathering information at festivals downtown to large format community meetings with opportunities to discuss details with the design team.

This will truly be a park for everyone. It will take decades to fully develop.

When I think about all of the work that will be involved in the development of the park, from landscaping to historic renovation, I think about the opportunity to integrate a job-training program with all of the skills that will be required. Just that one piece is something that no other city has the opportunity to do. Not to mention that we will have the best new park in the country!

We have the opportunity right now, to define the Raleigh that we will be.

Will we be an inclusive, sustainable, equitable, progressive city that understands the future? A City that understands we are changing, living thing that not only must be cared for, but must be guided, sometimes with tough decisions? This is our challenge.

To stay on those lists. To continue to be a safe, innovative, artistic, affordable, livable, desirable city; while staying one step ahead. To make sure that we are becoming the best in the country, while staying true to ourselves.

We’ve met the challenges of growth over the past 20 years and I know that we will continue to meet and excel into the Raleigh that we are always proud to call home.

Thank you.