



Andy Schor, Mayor

**Mayor Andy Schor's State of the City**

**The Abigail, Lansing, MI**

**February 5, 2020**

Thank you so much Siso for being our emcee. Siso lives and works downtown and is an ambassador for our City. Thank you Siso for being so passionate about Lansing!

Also, thank you to Donna Grinstead for the wonderful performance of the national anthem. Donna is a Lansing native who recently moved back to the City. Thank you for sharing your talent with us tonight. And what a great job by the Everett Jazz Ensemble for the lovely music before the speech. Go Vikings!

Thank you Bishop David Maxwell for the invocation. Bishop Maxwell is a pillar of our faith community here in Lansing. Thanks Bishop, for all you do for our community.

I would also like to thank the students from Willow Elementary for leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Last year Lansing School District's enrollment numbers were up for the first time in years. This shows incredible progress by our school board members, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. I am proud to be a Lansing Schools parent, and the City of Lansing is proud to partner with the school district in making our community a great place. Thank you Ayana, Anthony, Demar, Sierra and Adrian for being here tonight.

As always, I want to recognize and thank my family. Being Mayor means many long hours away from home, and I could not do any of this without the support of my lovely wife Erin and my children Ryan and Hannah. Erin, Ryan and Hannah thank you for supporting me and the people of Lansing. Will you please stand so we can all thank you?

In addition, thank you to my City Council partners for joining me here this evening. Congratulations to our new council leadership - President Peter Spadafore and Vice President Adam Hussain, who I have full confidence in to lead the legislative branch through the challenges of city government. We have accomplished a lot in the last two years, and I am proud of the way we have resolved issues respectfully and together. I would also like to welcome our newest Councilmember, Brandon Betz. I certainly remember what it was like to be new just two years ago, and I know you have already hit the ground

running. I look forward to all of the work we will accomplish together for the City of Lansing in 2020 and beyond!

I also want to recognize our wonderful staff at the City of Lansing. Our Department Directors, who work so hard for Lansing residents 24/7, are here this evening. This is a job of extreme highs and lows, and I am grateful to my team for helping me navigate it all. Would my cabinet and my staff please stand to be recognized?

We also have with us some important state officials. We have our very own State Representative Sarah Anthony from Lansing, as well as Representatives Kara Hope and Angela Witwer, both of whom represent parts of Lansing. We are also joined by our State Senator Curtis Hertel, Jr. Thank you all for advocating for Lansing in the state legislature!

Finally, I want to thank all of the Lansing residents and supporters that have joined me here tonight or are watching at home. I am told by our friends at Lansing Facts that I should be calling you all Lanstronauts. While I am not announcing a name change for Lansing residents, I do appreciate the excitement for Lansing and thank everyone for joining us here at The Abigail for the first time to view the renovation of this historic facility. This building sat vacant for decades until it recently went through this extensive renovation. Now it contains 60 senior apartments that will be opening in the coming weeks giving these residents easy access to Old Town, Downtown and several commercial corridors. This building is part of the former Michigan School for the Blind campus, where Stevie Wonder and so many others went to school, including Arlene Moore who is with us here this evening as a guest of the legendary Alfreda Schmidt. Thank you for joining us here this evening.

Two years. It has been two years since I took office as Mayor of Lansing. We have done so much, that it feels 20 years! The pace of this job is extraordinary, but the work is rewarding and exciting. We have no plans to slow down in our third year.

2019 was a busy year that saw buildings go up, streets and sidewalks being repaired, neighborhoods engaging with one another and the city, and even the rare birth of an endangered Black Rhinoceros. We were thrilled to welcome the world-renowned Jaali to Potter Park Zoo in December. If you have not seen photos or videos of Jaali check out Potter Park's website and social media feeds. He is Lansing at its most adorable!

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

One of the most exciting parts of being Mayor is working on new economic development projects and watching this city grow. Last year, we announced significant investment in Lansing, including an increase of more than 200 million dollars in construction. That is almost three times the investment of the year before, and shows that our economy is strong and people are putting their time and money into Lansing. Our economic development staff works tirelessly to ensure projects are moving forward, and we are moving faster than the speed of business. This is all part of my vision to create jobs and grow our economy in our downtown, on our corridors, and in our neighborhoods.

While working with businesses and developers to create jobs is important, we have insisted on public improvements along with job creation.

We are thrilled to be reactivating the former EDS site in south Lansing, a building that stood vacant for a decade. As part of this project, we required the developer to make public improvements to the corner of Washington Avenue and Holmes Road. This has resulted in the redevelopment of a vacant building, as well as greenspace and other beautification efforts in south Lansing.

We are also requiring public improvements in Southeast Lansing at the new housing development at the intersection of Jolly and Dunkel roads which will highlight this important entrance to the City.

At the eastern entrance to the City, the Red Cedar Development is underway. This development also features public improvements including new roads, a public park and amphitheater, in addition to a hotel, retail space and housing.

Throughout the city, we continue to help small businesses and focus on corridor redevelopment. Our corridors are the arteries of our community and the front door to our neighbors. Revitalizing our corridors is critical to Lansing's neighborhood growth. Last year we awarded 13 new façade grants to businesses all over Lansing. Businesses including Piazzano's on the north side, The Camera Shop on the south side, REACH Art Studio in REOTown, Biggby on the west side and Lam's Sweeper Shop on the east side all received the grant and technical assistance to give their facades a new look. This program has been wildly successful, and we are excited to continue to help our small businesses.

As part of our corridor focus, we created two new Corridor Improvement Authorities on South Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and another on North Grand River Avenue. This means we now have four corridor improvement authorities in the City of Lansing whose goal is to focus on revitalizing these important areas. Our two existing authorities on Michigan Avenue and West Saginaw Street have already approved their corridor plans, and we are looking forward to new opportunities on all four of these critical arteries. Thanks to all the citizen representatives on these boards that volunteer their time to make Lansing better, and thanks to the Lansing Economic Area Partnership staff who help to make these ideas a reality!

Our downtown is also booming. We have seen new businesses come to the Washington Square including Mo Wings, Soul Nutrition, the reopening of Edmund's, and others. They join the many businesses that have been staples in the downtown for decades, such as Kostichek's, the Peanut Shop, Linn & Owen Jewelers, and so many others.

But we need to continue to grow our downtown as a destination for residents, workers, and visitors. We are excited with the new leadership at Downtown Lansing Inc. Our new Executive Director Cathleen Edgerly and her team, including Siso, are doing great work. We have a busy downtown during the workday, but we need to continue to activate our downtown on evenings and weekends. We are currently seeing more activity outside of work hours than we had in the past, but there is still work to do. It is not enough to attract and keep visitors here; to create a truly walkable downtown, we need more residents living downtown. When people live in a downtown, businesses are more likely to stay open late and on weekends because they will be profitable. And we are seeing now, more than ever, that people want to live in places where they can walk to the shops and restaurants, especially in a dense downtown area. So, creating housing opportunities has been a priority.

In the Stadium District, there has been incredible progress on the new Meijer grocery store and Courtyard by Marriott Hotel. That project, which also includes 36 new units of housing, is opening in the summer and will be transformative for the downtown and eastside neighborhoods.

Near Lansing Community College in the northern downtown area, the former Oliver Towers site has been redeveloped into the Capitol View apartments. This property will be converted from a building that has been empty for years to 96 new units of housing on Capitol Avenue opening this spring. In our southern downtown, the former YMCA property will take on new life as the Metro Place Apartments with 145 units of new housing. If you have been by either of these sites you will see that they look great, and they are activating spaces that have been vacant for decades. I am excited that in 2020, we will have 277 units of NEW housing in Downtown Lansing alone.

Of course our new residents need things to do downtown, and that is where amenities come in. The stadium district saw the opening of our newest public space, Rotary Park, last summer. Our partners at the Capital Region Community Foundation spearheaded this project, and more than 1.3 million dollars was invested in the riverfront park. On summer evenings you can enjoy the sand at the beach, join a fun run or kayak on the Grand River.

Michigan Avenue continues to be one of our most active corridors, and development is booming there. There are thriving new restaurants including Tannin and Arcadia joining staples of the area like Strange Matter, The Avenue, Green Door and others. This is in addition to new housing and retail space in the Venue building, and the Provident Place development opens this spring with 9,500 square feet of retail space and 33 units of new housing. We are excited about all of this growth on the Michigan Avenue Corridor!

## **ART**

Art, especially public art which can be seen in all corners of this city, has been a significant focus of my administration. To be a great city, you have to show your strengths. One of our strengths is the talent of our artists and the creativity in our community. Our Arts Commission, chaired by the incredible Erin Schor, has been working diligently for nearly two years to bring more art to Lansing and to highlight the great work the arts community is already doing.

This year, our arts grant program is supporting wonderful Lansing arts organizations including the Lansing Art Gallery, Impression 5, and the Lansing Symphony Orchestra. Each year we also announce an arts impact grant of \$75,000. This large project intends to create an impact in the community. Past winners include the Portrait of a Dreamer on Michigan Avenue and the Below the Stacks Mural Festival which gave us ten new murals throughout the City of Lansing. You can't miss them if you drive around this city.

The impact projects are so large and complex that it can take some time to get them moving. This is the case with the 2018 winner. That project, a massive scale projection mapping on a downtown building, has been a labor of love. We are thrilled to announce it will go live on April 16 in Downtown Lansing during the 10th edition of the Capital City Film Festival. Please join us for the kickoff of that incredible project once it gets dark that evening. You won't want to miss this!

I am pleased to announce the winner of the 2020 arts impact grant tonight. Congratulations to Alexandra Leonard, who will lead production of a ceramic tile mural on multiple walls and on the steps of the Shiawassee Street bridge. This will be a collaborative project, as she plans to hold community workshops

where residents can participate in the creation of the tiles. Congratulations to Alexandra, and we can not wait to have this beautiful new art downtown!

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Investing in our aging infrastructure continues to be a challenge because the vast majority of our road funding comes from the state of Michigan. Despite the lack of significant new infrastructure investment, particularly for neighborhood roads, we are still tasked with doing our best to fix our streets. We have made some progress though. There were a lot of construction barrels in the City last year as we improved nearly 15 miles of road including East and West Mount Hope Avenue, Miller Road, Capitol Avenue, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Turner Street. Our pothole crews responded to 2,542 pothole complaints, an increase of 24 percent over 2018. We strive to fill potholes within 24 hours of the report and frequently meet that goal.

If you see a pothole the best way to report it is through our Lansing Connect app or through Lansing Connect on our website. At this time 60 percent of our reports come through the app, and it's the most effective way to reach out to our public service team.

I am also thrilled that our downtown streets will look a little different later this summer. Last year we received funding from the State to convert six of our one-way downtown streets to two-way – Capitol Avenue, Grand Avenue, Ottawa Street, Allegan Street, Pine Street and Walnut Street. Two-way streets have been shown to slow traffic, make streets more pedestrian-friendly, safer for our residents and visitors, and more beneficial to local businesses by giving them more visibility. While downtown is our core business district and a destination for residents, visitors, and workers, it is also a neighborhood. With all the new housing we want our new residents to know that their neighborhood has walkable, pedestrian-friendly streets.

Walkable streets are critical for everyone and are particularly important in creating an age-friendly community. In 2015, the City joined AARP's Age-Friendly Communities network to focus on creating an inclusive and accessible environment that promotes active aging. Lansing's population is aging, with our greatest increase in population coming from those between the ages of 55 and 64. We have now developed an age-friendly community plan, and are working to implement it.

We need strong leadership to implement this plan, and Council Member Carol Wood has agreed to chair the age-friendly communities steering committee. Through her work with RSVP and many years of service to the community, she is an obvious choice for this important role. Thank you Councilwoman for your leadership in agreeing to chair this committee and I look forward to the committee's report later this year.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS**

A huge focus of my administration has been on neighborhoods. We are fortunate to have many vibrant, active neighborhoods in the City of Lansing, and our Department of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement is leading the charge by creating events and opportunities for our neighbors to engage with the City. Recently, our Love Your Block work, which has been funded through the Cities of Service program, has been recognized and honored internationally. We are proud that our team is an international model for civic engagement.

Economic mobility is also a key part of the growth of Lansing. We must always remember to focus on our people. Our neighborhoods are the heart of our city and we are proud to invest in our residents.

As part of our engagement, the City previously designated two neighborhoods of focus: the Baker Neighborhood and Southwest Lansing at Pleasant Grove and Holmes. These are two neighborhoods where we brought people together to invest resources and assist in economic mobility for the residents.

Southwest Lansing is home to wonderful citizens who are passionate about their community. From Rejuvenating South Lansing to the Southside Community Coalition to the many neighborhood groups, I commend those who are jumping in and making a difference. And I can not compliment the great people of Southwest Lansing without including the most passionate Southwest advocate – Council Member Adam Hussain. Thanks Adam for all your hard work in this important area of the city.

In December, we took the number two bus from the CATA station downtown to the Southside Community Coalition in the heart of the Southwest neighborhood. It was a great time to connect with the students at the Coalition and the neighbors there.

We opened one of our newest parks, Beacon Park, directly behind the Southside Community Coalition last year. The crowdfunding effort for the soccer field was a true success story with all the help we received from so many great community partners and companies that operate in Lansing. And it was so much fun helping build the playground at Beacon Park. We did get very muddy, but it was worth it! With this gorgeous soccer field and our city's newest playground, it is a place for the students at the Coalition and the neighbors in the area to enjoy. In that same area, our partners at CATA installed a brand new bus shelter that features community leaders in the artwork.

In the last few years, the Southwest Action Group, or SWAG, has worked with our neighborhoods team to focus on a town square at the intersection of Pleasant Grove and Holmes. This project has been complex, but the passion of the neighbors has continued to help power through the challenges. We are looking forward to a grand opening of the town square as early as this summer.

In the Baker Neighborhood, we have collaborated with several community organizations to assist specifically in that area. These organizations include the Potter Park Zoo, the Ingham County Land Bank, CATA, and Sycamore Creek Church. It also includes Habitat for Humanity, who gave a three-year commitment to working on homes in this neighborhood; an investment much appreciated and certainly welcome.

We also commend Bethlehem Lutheran Church, whose members invested directly in the students of the Baker neighborhood. Bethlehem Lutheran has partnered with Lansing SAVE, which is our nationally acclaimed partnership with the Lansing School District and MSUFCU to provide children's savings accounts. Children's savings accounts are effective in improving development in children and shrinking the college savings gap between low- and higher-income students. Bethlehem Lutheran will support 156 students in the Baker Neighborhood through a collection from their members, and last year alone they collected \$4,368 for Lansing SAVE students in the Baker Neighborhood. Thank you Bethlehem Lutheran, for investing in our kids.

Our partners at CATA also placed a new bus station in the Baker Neighborhood at the intersection of Baker Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. Thank you again to CATA for your continued investment in our neighborhoods.

The result of our focus on the Baker neighborhood is significant. Victim and property crime is down 33 percent, and demographics are shifting as more families with young children are moving into the neighborhood.

Tonight I would like to announce that we will be expanding our Neighborhoods of Focus work to the north east part of Lansing. In using available data to review resource needs throughout the city, we identified a neighborhood that needs additional resources. As such, I am announcing that the neighborhood that we are currently in right now – the Willow, Walnut and Comstock Park area – will be designated the next Neighborhood of Focus. This area will cover much of the north east part of Lansing from the river on the north to Saginaw on the south, and include Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Willow Street.

Like we did in Baker and southwest Lansing, the City of Lansing will focus on empowering our residents, building wealth, and ensuring they have the services they need while working with existing community partners in this area.

We will be intentionally collaborating with community organizations like Fearless Faith Church, led by the passionate and amazing Pastor Iris Cotton. We will also continue working with organizations like the Capital Area Housing Partnership, who have done such great work in the region and are headquartered right next door in the Neighborhood Empowerment Center. We will do a mapping of the resources that can be provided to this area, and will be working directly and intentionally with this neighborhood to create change.

Growing Lansing means proactively helping our residents. One of our most successful neighborhood programs is the Lansing Police Department's Community Policing Program. We currently have eleven community policing officers helping residents and businesses throughout the city. Last year we created a new community police officer position in the Walnut and Old Town area. Tonight, I am pleased to share that as of February first, we have our 12<sup>th</sup> community policing area created in the south east part of the City. Thank you to Councilman Jeremy Garza for your advocacy and for working with Police Chief Daryl Green to make this happen for our residents of southeast Lansing.

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

Like cities throughout the state and nation, mental health issues have a significant impact in Lansing. We have seen this through the activities of our police, and it is why I prioritized placing a social worker in LPD so we can assist those with mental illness rather than putting them in jail. All City departments deal directly with mental illness every day including our fire department, our code compliance officers, our parks staff, and so many of our service providers that assist residents and visitors. We know that this is a major problem everywhere and, like the Governor did last week, tonight I am making this a priority for the city of Lansing. In Lansing, we have many experts on behavioral health, and we have many here in Lansing who deal with mental illness daily. We have our city employees, our two hospitals, community mental health, and many others. I am going to bring them all together to work on solutions for Lansing. So tonight, I am announcing the creation of a mental health taskforce. I will charge the taskforce with creating solutions, including a mental health organization inventory, a communications matrix so we know

how to best address these issues together, and other necessary solutions. I will appoint this task force soon, and look forward to their recommendations.

## **FINANCIAL HEALTH**

While we are proud of all of the work being done, we are aware of the challenges that need to be addressed. Over the last two years, we have had a tremendous internal focus on our financial health. Talking about the budget, our audits, union contracts, and other financial obligations of the City of Lansing is certainly not sexy. But the dollars we have, dictate the service that we can provide. Having a strong fiscal foundation is vital to providing needed and expected services. We need to have a competitive workforce to provide services, and at the same time satisfy obligations made to employees through the collective bargaining process for things like pensions.

We have taken steps to address future unfunded liabilities through negotiations with many of our employee unions. While these changes do not affect our bottom line today, they will make a significant difference to the future unfunded liabilities for the taxpayers of Lansing.

Despite these important changes, altering processes for future savings will result in increased costs today. That means we are facing financial challenges in the next few years. Last year we worked with the Financial Health Team and our City Council partners to create the position of Chief Strategy Officer. The goal of this position was to review financial and operational efficiencies, and to review our legacy costs. We hired Shelbi Frayer as our Chief Strategy Officer in August, and it has been an intense five months. We are instituting internal controls to work better and more efficiently, allowing us to be better stewards of taxpayer dollars. And I certainly have to give credit where credit is due. While the FHT and business community proposed having a Chief Strategy Officer, and our employee unions supported the position, it was Councilmembers Patricia Spitzley and Peter Spadafore who were able to get it done. We worked together to identify money in the budget last year and create this position, and it is certainly paying dividends. As we navigate our fiscal reality, the next few years may be tough. But I am confident that between our team in the administration, and our City Council partners, we will make tough decisions to address these challenges head on.

While addressing these core city services is a necessary part of the job, it is also important to work with partners to ensure that all of our residents have equal opportunities. Just two weeks ago, I was asked to join the cities of Columbus, Houston, and West Sacramento in presenting to the US Conference of Mayors on the economic mobility efforts in Lansing. We are a leader in the nation, and the Conference wanted to show off our efforts and help others to learn from Lansing.

We have been working with a number of partners to assist our children in the Lansing School District with saving for college and the future. We have the already-mentioned Lansing SAVE college savings accounts, and we are working with Kroger so that one percent of their reward card purchases in Lansing go toward Lansing SAVE and our children for college. Simply by having a savings account for education in their name, students become three times more likely to attend college, trade school, or other post-secondary pursuits – and four times more likely to get their degree or certificate.

So tonight, I am thrilled to announce that we are taking economic mobility even further by creating what we are calling BOLD Lansing. BOLD stands for Believe. Optimize. Learn. Dream. The City of Lansing was one of only nine cities in the country chosen to be part of the What Works Cities: Economic Mobility



cohort. The cohort worked with many experts to align our economic mobility efforts to increase student success in Lansing.

BOLD Lansing is a partnership made up of the City, the Lansing School District, MSUFCU, the Capital Area College Access Network, Lansing Promise, Community Economic Development Association of Michigan and the Lansing Financial Empowerment Center. It will serve as a centralized resource where students and parents can get information about economic mobility services – from Lansing SAVE, to help with applying for financial aid, or one-on-one financial counseling. For more information on this important and exciting effort visit: [www.BOLDLansing.org](http://www.BOLDLansing.org). And thanks to all of these community partners who know the importance of helping our Lansing children!

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

In the last few years we have heard a lot about sustainability and addressing climate change. I agree that something needs to be done. I am proud to have supported several efforts nationally for sustainability, and last year the City of Lansing initiated both a climate action plan for the city and an energy efficiency review of our buildings. This is in addition to our LED street light conversion program, increased recycling initiatives including creation of a facility in Lansing this year, and a variety of other internal efforts being done by the city. These efforts will not only help the Earth, but they will save taxpayer dollars in efficiencies.

Tonight, I'm pleased to announce that the City of Lansing will create a Sustainability Manager and Coordinator this spring. This person will maintain, review, and help to implement the plans that we have so that they are not just left on a shelf. Thank you to Council Member Brian Jackson for your advocacy for this position. It is certainly important to have a single person whose job is to focus on sustainability priorities full time.

In addition we receive our climate action plan and our city energy efficiency plan in a month or two, and we have several sustainability efforts happening right now in Lansing. Thank you to Councilmember Kathie Dunbar for identifying the consultant and leading these efforts for the City of Lansing to create a climate action plan.

The last big effort that I want to highlight tonight is certainly also very important and one you will hear about often for the rest of this year. I want to remind everyone to fill out the Census. Having an accurate count of all of our residents in the 2020 census is imperative. Census count day is April first, and anyone residing in Lansing on that day must be counted whether you are a year-round resident, a college student or an international community member. Citizenship does not matter – we count ALL Lansing residents, and census forms are 100 percent confidential and protected by federal law.

You may ask: Why is this important? I have spent the last 25 minutes talking about services and people and neighborhoods. The Census impacts how much federal funding we receive for many of the services we provide. Approximately \$1,800 per person per year will be allocated over the next ten years. An accurate census ensures that Lansing receives the federal funding we need to continue to focus on what is most important - our people. It also determines our representation in Congress. Michigan continues to lose seats in Congress and every seat we lose means less ability to bring federal resources to our community. Lansing needs to Be Counted.

Most households will receive a postcard in March with information about completing the census questionnaire online. About 20 percent of households will receive a paper questionnaire. Lansing's Complete Count Committee is working with many community partners to ensure Lansing will Be Counted. If you want to join the Complete Count Committee and can help to talk to those in traditionally uncounted communities, or if you just want more information, you can visit [www.BeCountedLansing.com](http://www.BeCountedLansing.com). Lansing counts and we need all of you to participate in this important process.

#### **WRAP UP**

2019 was a busy year filled with both highs and lows, and I expect big things for the City in 2020. Representing this city is a tremendous honor and one I do not take for granted. Thank you for trusting me with this important job. Thank you to The Abigail for hosting us in this beautiful space, and thank you all, for the positive impact you make in Lansing.