

Getting Our Hearts, Houses & Hubs In Order

2012 State Of The City Address

Mayor C. Kim Bracey

April 12, 2012: 6 p.m.

Central Market

City of York, Pennsylvania

Congressman Platts, State Representatives, County Commissioners, City Council members, directors, front-line staff, members of City boards and authorities, representatives of the York City School District, former Mayor John Brenner, guests, my family, and a special friend all the way from California, I am honored to join you in York's social hall and cathedral, historic Central Market to report on the State of our City.

First, I want to thank all of our city citizens for working through tough economic and fiscal times to keep our city strong.

As an Air Force veteran, I also want to thank our men and women in the armed services here with us tonight for your service to a grateful nation.

York's Central Market has been a cherished living tradition since 1888.

In 1842, 45 years before our city even was incorporated and 46 years before this market was built, the famous English author, Charles Dickens, visited York.

Just a few yards away from here, Dickens dined and stayed at the White Hall Hotel, now the preserved National House. This is the soon-to-be-opened "Good Dog Taproom", which will add to downtown's reputation as the county's craft beer and social epicenter.

It is fitting that visitors to the old White Hall Hotel will be tilting back pints once again, as if the ghost of Dickens, the author of A Tale of Two Cities, lingers.

Indeed, our York in 2012 is a tale of two cities. One tale is of a City that is a thriving and bustling urban community -- the commercial, recreational, residential and cultural hub of one of the fastest growing and healthiest counties in Pennsylvania.

Another tale is of the fiscal city of systemic constraints and legacy costs, with 38% of the total value of its real estate being tax exempt.

Despite our challenges, together, we have divined streams of creative partnerships, policies, and programs; new jobs; and neighborhood renewal.

Yet the present fiscal crisis threatens the momentum and promise of York and scores of core communities throughout the Commonwealth.

It is time, then, to take an honest look in our mirrors, talk straight, and determine real solutions to realize fiscal stability and self-reliance.

FISCAL FREEDOM AND STABILITY CAMPAIGN

First things first. Let it be known far and wide: your City Hall's professional ethics, management, and internal controls are as strong as they can be.

The Pennsylvania Economy League, Public Financial Management, the Department of Community and Economic Development, and third party auditors confirm that York's budget process and practices are as open, deliberative, and sound as they can be for a Pennsylvania City.

Consultants, experts, and state officials have repeated over and over again that your city government has competent, capable, and committed fiscal management.

Regardless, systemic constraints, structural deficits, and legacy costs batter us every year and threaten our future.

Simply put, Pennsylvania's local tax, pension, and arbitration systems, as well as urban boundaries are outdated, broken, and unfair.

In counties throughout Pennsylvania, all roads lead to our little Romes.

But our little Romes are burning.

You know this.

You also know that we need novel partnerships, innovative policy, and comprehensive reform so that our cores can be restored.

You also know that our state government has the ability to do that.

Twenty-one Pennsylvania municipalities, most recently the Cities of Altoona, Harrisburg, and Reading, are now in Act 47 distressed status.

Starved for resources, our landlocked cities consume property taxes just to avoid being charred and suffocated by circumstances beyond their control. That is no way to survive, let alone thrive.

In addition to pension and arbitration reform, we need a healthy menu of local options, freedom, and flexibility to get back to fiscal health.

In the meantime, we will continue to be responsible stewards of the public purse.

As promised last year, we launched our **Fiscal Freedom and Stability** campaign, using all tools in our belt to realize cost savings and rally for reform to restore our cores.

Not all of the following campaign efforts and innovations have been politically popular, but all of them were the right thing to do.

First, by scrutinizing all overtime and by rescheduling shifts, we reduced costs by about \$600,000 per year. Such savings were the direct result of the leadership of Fire Chief Steve Buffington. He reined in costs, while the professionalism, experience, and cooperation of our fire fighters continued to deliver the same quality services.

I am grateful to our fire fighters for their service and to our fire chief, who, after thirty years of service to the citizens of York, has decided to retire.

A round of applause please!

Second, we have pursued regionalizing services with real results. We sensibly outsourced fire services to North York Borough. We also have engaged in serious talks with York Area United Fire Rescue to form a first ever metro York fire service that reduces costs while not compromising coverage or response times. We are committed to public safety. We also must take a good, hard look at ourselves in the mirror. If we can realize cost savings without risking safety, we will do so.

Third, along with 28 other core municipalities, we helped to prepare the **Pennsylvania League of Cities Core Communities in Crisis Report**. For over a year, we have endorsed its recommendations. Once again, we urge our General Assembly to implement the PLCM recommendations.

These efforts, married with the efforts of nine **Pennsylvania Chambers of Commerce**, including York's own, led to the **Coalition for Sustainable Communities Initiative** -- government officials working with business leaders to restore our core communities to fiscal health. Tonight, I urge our General Assembly to advance the Coalition's recommendations.

We also had good, honest talks with our County Commissioners about the present crisis and proposed innovative ways and means to restore our county seat and share resources with cores throughout York County.

Joined by Commissioner Steve Chronister and Councilman Henry Nixon, we are strengthening our **Fair Share Initiative**, aimed at securing an increase in the total contributions of payments in lieu of taxes from tax exempt entities.

Fair Share won an early success with **MANTEC**, a nine-county non-profit headquartered in our city. Led by its CEO, **John Lloyd MANTEC**, for the first time in its history, has willingly offered to pay contribution in lieu of taxes equivalent to their annual city tax rate in 2012 and beyond – about \$13000 per year. Mr. Lloyd that is stewardship at its finest! Thank you.

As of May 1st, we will aggressively seek to recoup unpaid sewer and refuse bills, which currently total \$13 million. This is a first-of-its-kind, hard-line collection effort for our city.

Over two years, I have heard requests of debt forgiveness, but, given our city's fiscal state, enough is enough. We will charge interest to outstanding balances, affix municipal liens to delinquent properties, and cut off service to those who refuse to pay.

Our citizens who pay their bills and are in good-standing should not subsidize others' irresponsibility.

We have begun a valuation process of many City assets. This process will reveal the real value of city-owned assets, such as the sewer collection system and parking system. It also will help inform good faith negotiations for possible, and I stress the word "possible," purchases or leases.

Finally, we will continue to evaluate other options, such as a fairer earned income tax system that would be shared by commuters. We also will continue our due diligence of whether or not to enter Act 47. Act 47 is not a panacea for what ails us, but all reasonable options must be on the table.

That's a lot of work to foster fiscal stability in just a little over two years in office.

My pledge tonight is to continue our fiscal freedom initiatives, pursue cost-effective options, and fight for new revenue streams, while urging our state to help our cores help themselves.

My call to each of you is to support these initiatives, support our many struggling cities and boroughs, and urge our statewide elected officials to produce real reforms to restore our cores.

Despite these comprehensive measures and efforts, constraints and legacy costs conspire against us.

And As Yorkers, we're used to that, and we welcome the challenge.

And I'll take our odds, because our city, your county seat, at 125 years young, is much more than worth saving.

York IS worth restoring.

York IS worth cherishing.

York IS worth fighting for to make it hum, tick, and thrive.

And we will never, ever, ever give up on our York.

That commitment is as strong as the bricks and beams of this magnificent market.

A second city of “great expectations,” our physical, cultural, and commercial city – the progressive hub and heart of York County -- our York of neighborhoods, networks, and opportunity – is on the move!

JOB ONE INITIATIVE

Under our **Job One Initiative**, your City government has made customer service an essential value of all departments.

Under my watch, we have gotten our own houses in order to meet 21st century demands and to effectively serve all of our people.

We sought and secured a five million dollar state grant for the acquisition and redevelopment of 101 South George Street, your new City Hall, and for modernizing the former City Hall into a stand-alone Police Headquarters.

Your new City Hall is now open for business and centralized and streamlined customer service. Including ample parking and dignified council chambers, finally, finally, your City Hall is a convenient and efficient one-stop shop.

Through rent savings and rent earnings that pay off the expense over time, your new City Hall comes at NO net cost to City taxpayers.

Your city government will practice what we preach, and we will keep our own houses in order to deliver quality, professional customer service.

That was my pledge when I took office. And that is my commitment to you tonight as I announce three new priorities.

First, your government is becoming a leader in energy efficiency, because it is the right and smart thing to do, and because the headquarters of the nation’s leader – Johnson Controls – is in our backyard.

Johnston Controls-led projects will bring long-term energy efficiency and cost savings to three city-owned “houses.”: your new City Hall, our Police Headquarters, and our Sanitary Sewer Maintenance facility.

Second, from the west end to the east end, Market Street has not been repaved in two decades. That must change. The milling and repaving of Market Street from city line to city line must be done. Tonight, I urge the York Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to make this a top priority so this \$2.5 million project, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the federal government, will begin by 2015.

Third, user-friendly parking is a big part of customer service.

So, focusing in our Central Business District, I have directed our team to implement pilot digital parking kiosks.

User-friendly kiosks will begin replacing outdated meters and accept quarters, cash, and credit or debit cards.

COMMUNITY POLICING

We have stayed the course with our Community Policing strategy that focuses on nipping nuisances in the bud and pro-actively solving problems. This philosophy is what Police Chief Kahley likes to call “Problem-Solving Policing.”

Since I took office, hitting the sidewalks, face-to-face communication, building mutual trust, and neighborhood awareness are the four pillars of that philosophy. These pillars stem from a foundation of individual responsibility, familial responsibility, and neighborhood pride.

Crime is an issue that concerns us all, and fighting it involves us all.

We cannot allow violent crime to define our city, and it does not.

But we must take another hard look in that mirror, for facts are stubborn things. In 2011, 40% of the victims of homicide were black males under 30 years of age. And 7 out of 10 of the perpetrators of these violent crimes were black males, with an average age of 23.

I have a son who fits those demographics. I understand the anxiety one feels when hearing those statistics. And I understand the never-ending responsibility we have as parents to teach our children to avoid drugs and guns and to withstand peer pressure.

Removing negative elements from our community will take effective community policing. But it also will take strong nuclear and extended families, good jobs, dedicated clergy, and tough magistrates and judges. It also will take a quality education system that protects, educates, and prepares our children and youth.

Your concerns and calls for a safer York do not fall on deaf ears. Your City Police work tirelessly, and they deserve our support. And they need us, all of us, working with them.

So, for example, when Little Johnny comes home at 11 p.m. with a new pair of hundred dollar sneakers that you did not purchase and Little Johnny is fourteen years of age with no job and no means to buy those shoes, YOU, his mom or dad, need to be an involved parent and find out where those shoes came from. And if necessary contact the appropriate authority.

The lesson is as old as this building, but it bears repeating: public safety starts with individual responsibility and in the home; it starts with you.

For our part, Chief Kahley already has put more uniformed officers on our streets by using existing personnel. For the first time in recent history, the city now has six – that’s right, six -- neighborhood enforcement units.

Our community policing strategy is yielding quantifiable results. In 2011, city burglaries decreased from 555 to 343, the lowest amount in a decade.

In fact, violent crime throughout York County was its lowest since 2005.

This is a county-wide effort, as the fate of our county seat and our city is one and the same. Our County Commissioners know this. Effective neighborhood units would not be possible without an annual allocation of \$200,000 made by them.

Commissioners Steve Chronister, Doug Hoke, and Chris Reilly, please stand so we can recognize your leadership!

ZEAL FOR CURB APPEAL AND ZERO TOLERANCE FOR BLIGHT INITIATIVES

Over the last two years, your City Hall launched our **Zeal for Curb Appeal** and **Zero Tolerance for Blight** initiatives.

Together, we have made considerable progress on each.

We pledged that we would purchase four litter vacuums to be routinely deployed to keep our downtown clean. Presently, two are operated by our City Public Works Clean Crew and two by Downtown Inc.

We continue to appreciate and strengthen our partnership with DI. For example, we financially support a new DI business liaison, who pursues our existing economic development priorities.

Now equipped with a new zoning ordinance and new complementary ordinances, your city government is stepping up efforts to cite unseemly signage, soiled furniture, and outside vending machines. They cheapen our charm.

Pursuant to our Zero Tolerance for Blight pledge, we performed 12,043 property inspections in 2011 leading to 2,700 violation notices and 632 citations. We acquired long-time neighborhood nuisances, Gus' Tavern in Salem Square, and we are pending settlement on the American Legion building on East Princess Street.

Made up of several, collaborating city departments and our York County Sheriff's department, our Civil Enforcement Team conducted six "clean sweeps" in 2011.

Citizen involvement and empowerment are crucial to clean sweeps and curb appeal.

My thanks go to the citizens who participated in our numerous citywide clean ups. By the way, there is one this Saturday! I look forward to seeing you at 7:30 a.m. at City Hall!

My thanks also go to our citizens for their patience as we completed the **REBUILD York** initiative in 2011. **REBUILD** repaved 17 city streets, made streetscape improvements along Beaver and Pine, and added many handicap-accessible curb cuts.

As citizens, we are the ultimate guarantor of curb appeal. So, let's recapture and practice individual responsibility and self-reliance city-wide! Our **Take 10 On Tuesdays** program aims to do just that by encouraging able-bodied people to take ten minutes each Tuesday to clean their corners of our city.

WILLIAM PENN COMPACT

As pledged last year, we are building a William Penn Compact so our city government and school district can work in tandem. Although we are legally separate and distinct from the school district, our city government has a vested interest in the success of the school district, and vice versa.

City School Superintendant Debra Wortham now has cabinet level access to our administration. We are more than pleased that she meets with our directors and me on a regular basis, and we enjoy a great working relationship.

Folks, we know that new leadership, discipline, and uniforms are important first steps, but just the beginning of what is needed to turn around a district that has been neglected for decades. Until we, as a community, get over the "City-Stigma," until we truly embrace engaging and mentoring our youth, and until the state steps up with meaningful reform, resources, and incentives, Metro York will have an ongoing competitive disadvantage.

Quality education for all is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and unlocking our county's full potential.

So, yes, there is a need for Magnet schools; there is a need for an international-focused academy; there is a need for a regional arts-infused education; and, yes, charter schools are needed. All of the above, as well as regional consolidation must be on the table.

Quality education for all, not just for some, is the most pressing human rights and economic development challenge for York County in the 21st century.

A great adventure awaits us if we seize it.

In a world of rising voluntary segregation, forces of NIMBYism, an acronym for “Not In My Back Yard,” will challenge efforts to consolidate school districts. And C-A-V-E people, standing for “Citizens Against Virtually Everything”, will club and combat change, no matter how just and smart.

But, if we truly believe in liberty, justice and opportunity for all, we must break through the walls and fences of NIMBYism to embrace each other, and we must persevere through the valley of the CAVEs to reach the mountaintop of our full potential.

All the while, our city teachers and education professionals should be respected and embraced for their grace under pressure.

In my two years as Mayor, I am proud to have visited every single school in our District. I have seen the bright, expressive faces of our students, and listened to their hopes, fears, and dreams.

Tonight’s youth award winners are just a sample of the great students we have in our City. They deserve our recognition and support, and they should inspire all of us.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Through the vision, laser focus, and tenacity of our Economic and Community Development Department, we are building a better York, and investor confidence is strong.

In 2011, our Bureau of Permits, Planning, and Zoning approved 1,753 building permits and THAT is up by 858 from 2010.

That paved the way for 171 new businesses and private ventures, and THAT is up by 61 from 2010.

These are economic indicators, and they indicate economic improvement!

Tonight we welcome a loud and “Live” future in our York.

A long fly ball from Sovereign Bank Stadium sits the former Bi-Comp building, a vacant, century old brick building of 50,000 square feet.

In 2011, native sons of York, three members of the multi-platinum rock band Live, fell in love with 210 York Street.

Since then, this **Gracious Few** have made it the nucleus of Think Loud Development, a cutting-edge company and tech hub merging creative minds, a recording studio, and high-end apartments.

The \$45 million Think Loud project is slated to add up to 60 new jobs and begin construction this summer.

Native sons Patrick Dahlheimer, Chad Gracey, and Chad Taylor, welcome home! You can light up our stages and blow out our eardrums in our City anytime you wish!

And business partner, Bill Hynes, tonight we adopt you as our own.

LEAN, GREEN & SERENE YORK

Announced last year and partnering with the White House and first-lady Michelle Obama, our administration, with leadership from our Health Bureau, has launched our **Lean, Green, and Serene York** campaign.

Lean, Green, and Serene York encourages a healthier and greener York, one that helps to make our citizens more active, productive, and fulfilled.

Enter **Barbers with a Heart**, which paired WellSpan doctors and city barber shops to educate customers and provide free blood pressure screenings to catch early warning signs of hypertension and diabetes.

A leaner York requires good parks to stretch our muscles and expand our lungs. Enter **Bring On Play**, whose mission is to renovate one playground per year and promote active lifestyles and family interaction.

The York Revolution led fundraising efforts for a grand slam of a project in 2011 at Westminster Park.

To continue the beat and build, historic Penn Park is up next in 2012.

Bring On Play's resume includes Lincoln Park, Allen Park, Westminster Park, and now Penn Park!

Bring on Play, keep bringing it on!

Good things come in three this Spring and Summer at Memorial Park.

First, a partnership of your City Hall, the County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Bob Hoffman Foundation is making Bob Hoffman Field more fan, visitor, and player-friendly.

Second, we have re-sealed the state-of-the-art Reid Menzer Memorial Skate Park.

Also, the new Gold Star Garden is sprouting new trees and markers to form an inspiring gateway that honors our war veterans and those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

To become a leaner, greener, and more serene York, access to fresh foods must be a health, human rights, and public priority.

A host of partners have seeded and sustained eight Urban Farms, York's 21st century Victory Gardens, in neighborhoods spanning our City. These gardens harvest nutritious fruits and vegetables for our neighbors in need and for families who want to garden together. Families who garden together stay together!

And we are building new neighborhood grocery stores! In our northeast neighborhood, C-Town Supermarket, a full-service grocery store, opened at the Yorktown Mall in 2011. Featuring a bakery, butcher, deli, and seafood counter, C-Town adds 35 new jobs.

Also, a new \$7.5 million public-private, mixed-use venture on the corner of South George Street and College Avenue, George Street Commons will add 28 townhomes and an upgraded fresh foods grocery store serving our south-side neighbors.

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Ladies and gentlemen, some forty-five years after Charles Dickens dined here, York's first mayor, Daniel Noell, a York architect, J.A. Dempwolf, and a new corporation had a vision for a majestic structure at the heart of York.

Mayor Noell directed a street commissioner to tear down Centre Square's shabby market sheds at 2 a.m. in June of 1887, York's first year as an official city.

It appears that my predecessor had special middle-of-the-night powers! I wish I had a few of them today!

Mayor Noell's act of "creative destruction" led to the creative construction of Central Market within just one year.

In just one year, following Dempwolf's Romanesque Revival design, 16 business men and farmers broke ground, York masons expertly laid brick after durable brick, and Baltimore shipwrights bowed and weaved the cathedral beams arching and crisscrossing above us.

Total construction cost: \$45,000.

Total political capital expended: tons.

Total value to generations of Yorkers: priceless!

When we, as Yorkers, put our minds to it and when the public and private sectors work, pull, and push together, we CAN achieve greatness.

We CAN build majestic markets and nurture nobility.

We CAN create breathtaking art and architecture and grow ground-breaking companies.

The evidence is all around you!

Today, both Central Market and Farmers Market are poised for major renovations thanks to a nearly \$800,000 commitment from the federal government and over \$3 million in state dollars, both of which your City Hall secured.

In 2012, working with the board of Farmers Market and York-based architects, together, we will develop a \$500,000 plan for Farmers Market to install a new roof, repair masonry, and make other changes.

A social hall for York's diverse peoples and for all budgets and tastes, Central Market, now with 60 vendors, has a great mix of legacy vendors and 34 new vendors added just in the last five years.

And by the way, an old market favorite, Marchio's Deli, re-opens this Saturday!

Attesting to market's unique character, Mudhook is the only brewpub housed in a 19th century market in Pennsylvania.

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we say to Central Market: happy birthday, one year early. Starting this month, a \$1.9 million upgrade begins so York's social hall and cathedral welcomes, delights, and nourishes for generations to come.

Board President Jessica Brubaker, all members of the board – past and present, Market Masters Casi Babinchack and Terrence Downs, all market vendors and stakeholders – traditional and new – thank you for your service.

All of you deserve our applause!

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The Bible says: "When there is no vision, the people perish".

Our long-term vision is to populate Continental Square, the Market District, and downtown with a critical mass of restaurants, cafes, and walkable destinations, especially those open after 6 p.m.

This strategy complements and contributes to our City's Strategic Plan and downtown's long-term 10-10-10 goal, sustaining 10 restaurants, 10 retailers, and 10 venues open after 6 p.m. within three connected blocks.

By clustering venues, we will cultivate a critical mass that generates jobs, opportunities, and synergies.

With York's legendary appetites and with your patronage, we will continue to seed and feed York's fresh foods revolution!

Friends, no great accomplishment occurs without a vision, followed by sweat, heartache, headaches, and perseverance.

The driving hope of a dream propels us to promised lands that we never could have reached alone.

Over the last few years, together, the private and public sectors developed, shared, and pursued a vision for our markets. Today, that vision is becoming a reality.

Make no mistake about it, together, we have devised and nurtured visions and plans and brought them to fruition. Successes do not occur over night, and many take more than one administration to be realized. But we have stuck to our convictions and stayed loyal to defined visions that have and are bringing hope and help to our people.

Just as we have done well by our markets, we will fight for these new visions and plans by tooth and by nail, by brick and by beam, and by hook and by crook.

Skeptics questioned whether our **West End Salem Square Revitalization Plan** ever would get off the ground.

Because of strong partnerships with the YMCA, our faith-based partners, committed neighbors, and our west-end nuisance enforcement unit, the Salem Square Plan is taking shape. Neighbors are noticing real changes.

We acquired and closed a long-time nuisance bar, the former Gus' Tavern, on Princess Street, and acquired other blighted buildings for re-use.

We added 50 new vintage street lights to Princess and Penn Streets.

The Women's Giving Circle, Kinsley Construction, Habitat for Humanity, and our Police Department added new breezeway gates between Princess Street row-homes. These durable, dignified gates deter criminal activity.

Some also said that the **Northwest Triangle** would never happen.

Once again, staying true to a vision is paying off.

After years of hard work, the Northwest Triangle is taking shape as new streetscape, infrastructure, and private investments by Kinsley Construction form the foundation for a bright

future. Now our attention turns to Beaver Street with the receipt of compelling, new development proposals.

Within the Northwest Triangle, creativity already is unleashed as the **York Academy Regional Charter School**, an international baccalaureate school, welcomed nearly 200 students in 2011. A sparkling collaboration of the City, Suburban, and Central York School Districts, the Academy will enroll about 300 students next school year.

Years ago, our City had a vision for a thriving **Arts & Market District** around Central Market. Some said that state funding would never come.

Because of a host of believers, artisans, retailers, and a cultural alliance, our shared vision, slowly but surely, is becoming a reality.

To anchor and advance our Arts & Market District, your City Hall secured a state capital grant to bring to life the new Marketview Arts.

Complementing surrounding studios, galleries, and boutiques, and owned by our partner, the County Industrial Development Authority, Marketview Arts will open its doors and unleash creativity this year! Marketview will feature York College's fine arts program, a gallery and reception hall, and work space for diverse artists.

Tonight, after this speech (yes, I'm almost done!), we welcome everyone to Marketview Arts, where we will unleash some fellowship and fun!

Please join me there for the center's first-ever reception to celebrate our York and our award recipients.

Today, skeptics question York's ability to become a Mecca for artists and artisans.

I say, "Why not?"

Metro York already is the home of artists, artisans, and visionaries, such as composer Dominic Argento, playwright Ken Ludwig, actors Cameron Mitchell and Craig Sheffer, sculptor Lorann Jacobs and the following city sons and daughters: folk artist Lewis Miller, artist Horace Bonham, the brothers Dempwolf architects, the brothers Goodridge photographers, sculptor Charles Rudy, vocalists of The Magnificent Men, playwright and poet Dorothy King, saxophonist Tim Warfield, and rockers Patrick Dahlheimer, Chad Gracey, and Chad Taylor!

That is just a partial list, and new and upcoming teams of talent are in our midst!

Our city also is home to the nation's first and only city-wide Artist Homestead Program. It has a proven record of success. Please join us in splattering the merits and incentives of this program far and wide, so we relocate more artists and artisans to our York!

In the 1960s, our city also was home to an interior design and furniture shop owned by the parents of a precocious child who took art lessons on Queen Street.

That little boy grew up to become one of the most significant artists of our time and a visionary who has inspired, delighted, and provoked millions throughout the globe.

The one and only, Jeff Koons, please rise so we can give you a proper York homecoming welcome!

Tonight we celebrate craftsmanship, arts, and authenticity in all of their wonderful forms.

From CapLive! to “Live” and Think Loud,
From hand-pressed Harleys to hand-craft breweries,
From gardens of gears to Jeff Koons and other imagineers,
From culinary creators to industrial fabricators,
From YorkArts and CityArt to Marketview Arts,
From the Codorus, to CODO, to Colorworks,
From the Strand-Capitol to the Pullo Center,
From Dreamwrights to our right to dream,
And everything and everyone in between,
Our arts and design capital can stand tall.

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My friends, we are getting our hearts, houses, and hubs in order to make our York the best community that it can be.

Just as our markets are the beating hearts and social hubs of our York, you are at the heart of our future.

We are the little city that could.

We are the little city that will.

We need all of you to lend your talents to the great task of building our body politic, our physical city, and our city of commerce and culture through collaboration, craftsmanship, and a commitment to quality.

Together, we can build that great second city – that shining, thriving city on the horizon that is our true potential.

Just as the great York masons and Baltimore shipwrights used brains and brawn to build the social cathedral in which we meet, your talents, skills, and can-do spirit can build a better and brighter York:

A York that is as humane and just as it is strong, resilient, and entrepreneurial;

Your York, one that that is as beautiful, creative, and visionary as it is fiscally smart and sound;

Our York, which is as united in purpose and promise as it is dynamically diverse in races, cultures, and skill sets;

One York, with liberty, opportunity, and justice for all!

May God bless you, and may God bless our York!