

# State of Our Future City of York Address

Mayor C. Kim Bracey

Valencia Ballroom

York, Pennsylvania

April 25, 2017

Governor Wolf, Congressman Perry, members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, County Commissioners, City Council members, our family of City employees, and friends, welcome!

During the past presidential election season at the end of 2016, harsh divisions, distrust, vitriol, and uncertainty ruled the land.

Then, as a new year dawned, a new promise was born.

Yes, everything changed.

In this very Valencia Ballroom, York's homegrown, Platinum-selling band, **Live**, after years estranged, finally re-united.

Our native, favorite sons re-united and played to a packed house to ring in the new year.

Yes, balance and harmony, finally, were restored to the Force and to our York.

If the band *Live* could re-unite, we knew that reconciliation between any warring parties was possible.

We knew that anything was possible.

And we were reminded, once again, that, yes, we are one York, indivisible and invincible for all.

It was as if a Jedi knight light years from the future whispered in our ears:

“May one York be with you.

May our future York

Swim in your restless, unrelenting soul.”

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In that spirit, tonight, we envision daring promises of the future. Yes, I could talk about the State of the City past, but, tonight, I refuse to deliver a State of the City address.

Instead, this is your ***State of Our Future City of York Address.***

Yes, friends, we could talk about how, concentrating on Community Policing in all neighborhoods, we consistently have decreased crime.

We could talk about how, each year, we continue to surpass our seven-year-old goal of pushing Part 1 crimes – the most serious crimes recorded by the F.B.I. -- below 2,000 per year.

We could talk about how, during the last seven-and-a-half years, Part I. crimes have decreased by 30%!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In 2008, there were 2,652 Part I. crimes. In 2016, there were 1,840 Part I. crimes. That equals a 30.7% decrease in Part I. crimes during the last eight years.

Friends, that's a stone cold fact that should warm all our hearts!

We could brag that 2016 marks the fourth straight year in which Part I. crimes were below 2,000.

We could tout that, as of 2016, thanks to WellSpan Health, all City Police officers have body cameras – a first for York County. Universal body cameras are good for our officers and our people because they record accurate evidence and encourage all of us to be on our best behavior.

We could celebrate our officers engaging citizens at Neighborhood Association meetings, play video games with our youngsters at Martin Library, sponsor bowling outings at Colony Park Bowling Lanes, and play hoops with our kids as part of ***Shoot 4 Peace*** at Voni Grimes Gym and William Penn Senior High School.

But let's talk about public safety for our future.

As we gaze into the future, we know that a York Rescue and Fire Services Department and a Police Services Department that reflect the demographics of the most diverse municipality in the region is important for forging a safer, more trusting future.

**Therefore, tonight, we announce our *Like Us Push*. No, this is not a shameless request to *LIKE* our City's Facebook page – but you should, rather this is an historic recruitment campaign aimed at making 25% of our public safety employees racial and ethnic minorities by 2030.**

We will make a stronger effort to recruit our own homegrown talent by reaching out to all of our middle school and high school students and post-secondary institutions in spreading the gospel that a career in public safety is honorable and rewarding.

**Therefore, to forge a better future, using federal community development block grant dollars and our regional Workforce Investment Board resources, we launched Legacy Builders Summer Youth Employment Program to employ city youth while exposing them to honorable careers in public service and other careers in our city.**

**Recently, our Gun Violence Intervention held its first-call-in with chronic criminal offenders in a city church. They were forced to participate lest they be found in violation of their parole.**

**We have to curb gun violence, one of the great civil rights and public health challenges of our time. My messages to the attendees were:**

**We want you out of prison. We want you safe and alive. We want a new life for you. And we will not tolerate gun crimes.**

**We also said that we will work with them to find counseling, employment or other services to help them get their lives on track. If they take one step toward us, we'll take more than one step toward them. We are providing them a second or third chance while giving our community a new lease on peace for all.**

For over a year, **My Brother's Keeper** has worked to eliminate the opportunity gaps and challenges facing our youth to ensure that as many of our greatest resource – our people -- are positioned to succeed.

For six years, our **100 Men Reading Program** has paired at least 100 local men with York City school students so literacy is “manly” and desirable.

This is just a small sampling of creative, homegrown efforts of peace, safety and encouragement.

Chiefs Kahley and Michaels, you are consummate professionals who keep your noses to the grindstone of every day. Please rise so we can show you our appreciation!

**[APPLAUSE]**

From the Avenues to Fireside, from Salem Square to Royal Square, from Springdale to the East End United Way, we have engaged citizens through our **City Halls for a Day**, and we have learned from you, our people, York’s greatest resource.

We handed out free dental kits, energy efficient light bulbs and smoke detectors while doing what we are



called to do: Listen to and serve our people with dignity, respect, and zeal.

From potholes, to sign repairs, to traffic calming, we have listened, and we have acted. We strive to do the little things right while pushing forward a bold, transformative vision to revitalize our neighborhoods and keep our city clean. None of our best work is meaningful or possible without you, our concerned citizens.

And none of our best work is meaningful or possible without our City workforce of over 300 that are in it for the long-haul for all people. For nearly eight years, we have given you a capable, stable, ethical, inclusive, seasoned, and forward-thinking city government because you deserve it.

All City employees and volunteers of City boards, authorities, and commissions, please rise so we can show you our appreciation.

## **[APPLAUSE]**

Healthy human relations in workforces and neighborhoods is essential to public safety and to the pursuit of opportunity and happiness for all.

Therefore, for our city employees, we extended benefits to domestic partners and added contraceptives to our health plan – both historic firsts. We continue to build and honor a diverse workforce that reflects the people whom we serve.

Therefore, I recruited CASA, Spanish for “home,” to open an office at City Hall.

I signed our Safe Haven Executive Order to let our immigrant community know that our York is welcoming and that we do not profile any of our peoples for selective citation or arrest.

Almost 30% of our population is Hispanic or Latino. We engage and integrate our law-abiding new American community who already are here through

job placement; English literacy training; and educational and legal services so they can become good citizens and neighbors.

We are one York with liberty and justice for all.

Our York is proud to have one of the first and most progressive human rights ordinances in the state.

To forge our future, partnering with West York Borough, I am proud to announce that our Human Relations Commission will share space at the centrally located West York Borough building on West Poplar Street.

West York Mayor Shawn Mauck and all those involved in this partnership – West York Borough Council, Human Relations Commissioners, staff and York City Council -- please rise so we can honor you for working for equality, justice and opportunity for all.

This sensible partnership is a testament to the needs of awareness, understanding, and empathy transcending municipal boundaries and an example of smart, multi-municipal collaboration and cost-sharing.

We are the white rose city, but not all our flowers are white.

May thousands of all flowers radiate in perennial freedom and dignity!

Black, brown, orange, yellow, gay, straight, and white, we all shine when we unite in freedom's light.

My friends, this summer, to honor one of York's greatest flowers -- the late, great Louis J. Appell, Jr., - our beloved baseball stadium will feature a throng of white roses gleaming right where Mr. Appell's work and vision always were – in the center of things and at a homerun distance – in the centerfield picnic area.

Because of pioneers like Mr. Appell and Governor Wolf, both of whom made professional baseball in York possible, we strive to build neighborhoods and districts of inclusiveness, dignity and pride for all.

Mr. Appell, we love you, we miss you, and we will never forget you and your legacies-in-progress.

Friends, as long as “I love Yorkers” like you never quit, never relent, never surrender, Mr. Appell never died. He simply multiplied into a more influential force than ever imagined. (pause)

### **Fiscal Discipline and Stability**

Looking closely at our ledger books, we could talk about the State of the City past.

We could talk about how we held the line on property taxes in 2013, 2014, and 2015, and lowered taxes by 1% in 2016 and 2% in 2017.

Yes, that's two years in a row of approved budgets with real estate tax reductions and a strategic plan to continue those reductions further to 15%!

That's cause for applause!

We could talk about how City Solicitor Jason Sabol won a state Supreme Court case establishing that deregulated public utilities have to pay business privilege taxes, helping to ensure that everyone is paying their fair share.

We could talk about how 37% of the value of city real estate is tax exempt but we continue to work with our gracious non-profits and tax exempt institutions to make up part of the difference with fair share contributions year-in, year-out.

But let's talk about our future fiscal city.

Led by our highly accomplished and capable Business Administrator Michael Doweary, we have realized real cost-savings.

As heralded by Auditor General DePasquale, who noted that York is at the cutting edge of managing its pension obligations, we have worked with our unions to rein in pension costs for the long-term.

And, friends, our long-term **Vision 2020** is on its way to reducing property taxes by 15% by 2020.

That's cause for applause!

### **Nine for Our Neighborhoods: City-wide Game-changers**

Friends, I know our people want to live in an aspirational community – a community that has a city-wide vision and is not content to rest on its laurels. So let's dream big and fight hard to forge a better future York. Here are our "Nine for Our Neighborhoods."

### **Nine For Our Neighborhoods**

## **First, universal pre-k.**

The costs of action is less than the long-term costs of inaction. And, we cannot criminalize and incarcerate our way out of challenges, but we can educate, enlighten, and ennoble our way to success.

I'm a proud product of Community Progress Council's Head Start program. I fondly recall attending pre-school with Mrs. Karen Brown at Zion United Church of Christ across from Penn Park.

My Head Start experience is not unique. It has been shared by tens of thousands of pre-schoolers since the 1960s throughout York County.

This vital program encourages preschoolers' intellectual, physical, and emotional growth and prepares them to enter school as learners.

Free Pre-K currently is available to 50% of York City School District three-and-four-year-olds, but our goal is 100% access. Whether the funding is from the



federal government, the state, or philanthropy, or all of the above, we must deliver quality pre-K for all.

We know that Head Start works.

We also know what doesn't work. I've heard the faint and not so faint dog whistles. I've heard the subtle and not so subtle scapegoating by some who cynically use the city, its poverty, and its children as political pawns or as punching bags. I've heard the subtle, objectifying, and degrading phrases --- phrases like "That city," phrases like "You know how they are," phrases like "If only the city...."

Well, friends, "This city is our city" "These young people are our young people". "Those people" are you and me, and they are our greatest hope for building a great county seat with liberty, justice and opportunity for all.

**Second**, we will replace food deserts throughout our city with food oases. York County is known as the

“Snack Food Capital of the World,” but many of our urban residents do not have easy access to basic nutrition. No city resident should have to walk more than a quarter mile to purchase fresh foods, vegetables and other healthy foods.

To combat that, our Healthy Corner Store Initiative has given micro-grants to neighborhood corner stores, including Lee’s Food Market on North Pershing, Pak’s Food Market on East Princess, Penn Farmers’ Market, on West Market, and Green’s Food Market on South George to replace processed foods with healthy, wholesome foods. We continue to reach out to more neighborhood stores to bring fresh foods into our communities and onto our plates.

A shout-out to York Fresh Food Farms for starting its first micro-farm in our City in our Parkway neighborhood and giving away over two tons of fresh produce to folks in need.

Thank you Shilvosky Buffalo and Craig Walt from our team and civic imagineers for bringing Corner Stores and gardens of goodness to a block near you!

**Third**, Salem Square and Olde Towne East – *two* Elm Street Neighborhoods.

That's right, tonight, I'm proud to announce that the Commonwealth has designated Salem Square as York's second Elm Street Neighborhood.

Your city government and the Salem Square Community Association worked hard for this designation, which will fast-track access to grants to improve the quality of life through better housing, streetscaping, and recreation.

Salem Square to the west complements our state and City's first Elm Street neighborhood – Olde Towne East to our east. Speaking of Olde Towne East, tonight, I endorse the 2.5 million dollar plans for Five-Leaf Remedies to convert a long-shuttered,

35,000 square foot former tobacco warehouse on Poplar Street to grow and process medical marijuana.

This is an ideal spot for reinventing old industrial York for the 21st century with family sustaining jobs while helping people in need and strengthening our tax base.

We envision downtown and her inner-ring neighborhoods – Olde Towne East, Salem Square and a host of other – cross-fertilizing each other with safe, well-lit paths to walk and bike, jobs that pay, schools that teach, resource centers that engage, and neighbors who nurture!

As go our neighborhoods, so goes our downtown and vice versa. We are part of a symbiotic whole where everything affects everything else.

In Salem Square, with our visionary friend Robert Lambert, President of York County Library System, we just opened Martin Library at Salem Square,

which provides a police resource center, after-school tutoring and programming, a satellite Martin Library, literacy training and a high-tech hub.

Martin at Salem employs local teens in need of work experience and offers free, online job-search access for adults.

Martin at Salem is a win-win for families, youth, places of worship, and all of our blessed west end neighbors.

Together, we're all-in for the long haul, and we're in it to win it.

**Fourth**, speaking of win-win situations, tonight, we pledge to launch an innovative, collaborative concept called WINS to ramp up our Community Resource Centers for the 21st century.

WINS stands for "We Inspire Neighborhoods. Sponsored by WellSpan in the neighborhood, EACH WINS will house a police satellite office, while

bringing holistic health, safety, literacy, nutrition, and job search resources and training directly to our people.

Spirit, mind, and body interconnect and feed off each other, just as neighborhood relations, infrastructure, public safety, and pride interconnect and feed off each other in.

Therefore, to forge our future, I am proud to announce that, our friends at WellSpan Health have pledged \$250,000 over the next three years to support Martin at Salem Square and to open at least a second WINS in a city neighborhood to be announced soon! Thank you, WellSpan Health.

Together, We Inspire Neighborhoods! (APPLAUSE)

**Fifth, aggressive new tools to fight nuisances and blight.** Tonight, to forge our future we are proud to announce that three more code enforcement officials and a new GPS system will allow us to nip

nuisances in the bud in real-time before they fester into blights.

**To beef up our Zero Tolerance for Blight initiative, I call upon our County Commissioners and York County Economic Alliance to create a countywide Landbank Authority to target and redevelop abandoned eyesore properties throughout our county. This countywide effort will eliminate nuisance properties that serve as havens for arson and illegal activity, transform blights into assets, and improve real estate values.**

**Sixth**, we will design and empower our inner-ring neighborhoods.

We could talk about downtown development and the over \$146 million in new development over the last eight years, including \$40 million in neighborhood

development, that has accrued during this administration.

We could talk about the \$20 million Yorktowne Hotel project, AND it receiving a \$10 million state grant, and the leadership of the wise Jack Kay and Kevin Schreiber of the York County Economic Alliance who will make the Yorktowne a polished jewel reinvented for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our hats go off to York College hospitality students for energizing the Yorktowne as a learning experience and our developers that will make the project as local as possible.

We could mention the over 9,000 college students studying in our city, and how our York gradually is becoming a “College Town” in the very best sense of that phrase. To that end, thank you to the College Town Takeover Committee that brings students from our three post-secondary schools into our City.



HACC-York, Penn State York, and York College, you have a standing invitation to continue putting up stakes in our City! We have the space, amenities, and momentum, and we welcome youthful vitality. We all are Bearcats, Nittany Lions, Hawks, and Spartans! And, yes, York Generals professional football team founder and native Yorker Javan Matthews, we also are all York Generals! And, of course, we all are Revolutionaries!

Friends, we could share the good news that 623 new residential units have been completed or are underway during our administration. That means a critical mass of new residents living, walking, working, recreating and spending their dollars in our City.

We also could talk about how Central Market boasts more vendors than at any time in recent memory.

We could talk about how the first block of West Market features, among other ribbon cuttings, bright new housing, Holy Hound, a brand new Isaac's, and soon-to-open Crystal Ball Brewery.

Since we are meeting here on North George Street --- the heart of ***Gorgeous George***, we could tout new restaurants like the Handsome Cab, Rockfish Public House, Revival, new art galleries, and mention old favorites, like Tutoni's and the Left Bank, and the Revs' 11th Season. We could boast of the best of Broadway playing in the soon-to-be christened Appell Performing Arts Center.

We could talk about the esteemed Valencia Ballroom, where we meet tonight. If only these walls could sing: They would croon about crowds here enjoying jazz and the big band era, to Sinatra and du-wop, to rock, pop and funk, and into a Live and loud future. In the ambitious hands of the Kinsleys and Tom Sibol and

Jeremiah Anderson, I have a hunch that the Valencia will be the maître de of ***Gorgeous George***, York's red carpet entertainment district.

That's cause for applause!

But to forge our future, let's talk about our northeast neighborhoods.

In our northeast, thanks to Think Loud, we will transform Poorhouse Run into a gigabyte bandwidth stream that blitzes throughout the east coast from New York City to D.C.

After \$20 million of work, this 50,000 square feet high nerve center will add 150 jobs and and cut Grammy caliber records in its state-of-the art Think Loud Studios.

For the record, your city administration was the first to endorse these hometown boys and their promise of high speed. Look forward to an exciting announcement from Think Loud next week.

Long before Think Loud planted roots there, a neighborhood champion, Crystal Sexton McEachin was serving and strengthening this neighborhood block-by-block and soul-by-soul. We lost Crystal this year. Her legacy lives on so long as we never stop improving this neighborhood and never stop practicing the Golden Rule of goodness for all.

Farther east, we will connect North Broad and surroundings into clean, green, livable spaces walkable to downtown. Developers are tuning up the 40,000 square foot Weaver Organ and Piano building into Loft-Style Flats with indoor parking.

Stay tuned for developments on this and the rebirth of the nearby Danskin site on State Street creating a vibrant new neighborhood off Philadelphia Street between Broad and State: ***Philly Village***, as I like to call it.

To our southeast, the imperial march of Royal Square, flanked by Princess, Duke, King and Queen Streets, goes on. Yes, we could talk about the Royal Square team recruiting the old Cobblestone's to join its round-table of shiny knights -- dozens of creatively re-used, concentrated parcels focused on the visual, culinary, and performing arts; vintage clothing and accessories; and Bohemian vitality, like the Bond industrial event space, Collusions Tapworks, Parliament Arts, Redeux, and Prime Art Supply.

**Seventh, the next big public-private partnership.** As the Northwest Triangle draws to a close with the opening of Keystone Colorworks and the ground-breaking of the York History Center, what's the next big thing? We must keep the momentum going. So, tonight, we announce that we will organize discussion groups of the best, brightest, and vested about Voni Grimes Gym, Parking Lot 11, and neighborhoods between Newton and College

Avenues to design the most desirable result for parcels that we have stitched together over the years.

Thank you to our state's DCED Secretary Dennis Davin for recently joining us to celebrate a \$1 million public-private structural restoration and facelift of our cherished Voni Grimes Gym, a neighborhood anchor for generations.

Our goal is to make sure that this district – ***The Duke of York*** – will complement existing friends, such as Guerreri's Garage and the Salvation Army, to name a few, while delivering decent jobs, design creativity, and dignity to connect Olde Towne East, Royal Square, and Downtown neighborhoods.

### **Eighth, our City-wide Park Conservancy.**

Last year, we promised that we would kick-off efforts for an Urban Parks Conservancy to seed our beautiful parks now and well into the future. Promises made, promises kept. President County Commissioner

Susan Byrnes, City Councilwoman Sandie Walker and I took the advice of York native son and Arizona Cardinals head coach Bruce Arians, who is fond of saying, “No Risk it, no biscuit.”

Tonight, we announce the launch of York’s first-ever Parks Conservancy! In the coming weeks, we will present to York’s Capital Campaign Committee in hopes of securing further contributions from York’s fundraising community. Commissioner Byrnes, Councilwoman Walker and our incredible Public Works Director Jim Gross, please rise so we can honor your commitment to this cause!

**Ninth, a Codorus flowing with economic and social justice for all.**

We could talk about our Codorus at RiverBend, and the graceful reconstruction of the Heritage Rail Trail from Grantley Street to Lafayette Plaza.

We could boast of the first-ever Codorus Corridor Green Action Plan, which meets federal waterway regulations while also nurturing an ecosystem that attracts wildlife and people.

Friends, walk along the Codorus and see fish, turtles, and egrets -- all signs of a rebounding water system.

But, as our Green Action Plan calls for, we know we can do more.

We will extend the York County Heritage Rail Trail to complete its connection from John Rudy County Park to the Maryland line.

We will replace drab, rocky banks with state-of-the-art materials that protect the flood wall integrity while beautifying and coloring our banks.

**To forge our future, let's make our Codorus a** welcoming, irresistible magnet for bikers, hikers, and heritage and recreation enthusiasts, as well as a job catalyst.



We are confident that the York History Center will soon receive a big state grant to open its doors in the Northwest Triangle.

To complement these efforts, tonight, I am proud to announce, that, after painstaking and never-say-die effort, we have received approval from our State's Department of Transportation for large, chocolate brown Historic Downtown York traveler signage along Interstate 83 directing motorists to **“HISTORIC DOWNTOWN YORK.”**

But we must dream bigger and do more.

I urge that the history center becomes a world-class Creation of the Nation Museum. As we gaze into the future, let's explore a Leader-Wolf Graduate School in Public Governance to honor York County's two governors – George Leader and Tom Wolf.

Let's explore making Stevens Avenue, which overlooks our Codorus, the Thaddeus Stevens

Promenade, in honor of the “Great Commoner” and Civil Rights icon who began his career on North Beaver. Imagine a strand replete with cobblestone streets and “painted lady” houses that brighten and beckon.

As we ponder York’s 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2041, let us make no small plans. As Nelson Mandela said, “It all seems impossible until it happens.”

Let’s design and demand more, insisting that our Heritage Rail Trail connects to a Grand History Trail linking York to the hallowed grounds of Gettysburg and Washington, D.C.

A river runs through all of us, and our Codorus runs through some of the most impoverished neighborhoods in our county. Let’s make our Codorus **an aspirational artery from DENTSPLY-Sirona to the southwest, to the Pa.**

**Amory building, future home of KidSpace, to Think Loud, and Route 30 to the northeast.**

Our Codorus represents our best test for justice and our best quest for replacing poverty with opportunity for all. Exploring an aggressive performance-based tax abatement program for green-certified river bank development, let's quest for river banks that flood with decent jobs, housing, and facades that face, grace, and embrace our Codorus from ravine to shining ravine.

Make no small plans. Let's run with the rapids and model our Codorus after great examples – the Reedy River in Greenville, South Carolina, and people-friendly river walks, ways, and parks in Providence, Rhode Island, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and Columbus, Georgia.

Let's explore our Codorus as a family-friendly park with water adventure courses, kayaks, rock climbing,

zip-lining, waterfalls, splash zones, public art parks, and recreational attractions.

Imagine a boathouse, kayak and riverboat condominiums, and marine biology learning center apprenticing York City youth.

Taking a cue from Yorker and veteran Harrold Redding, whose determination led to the federal designation of March 29<sup>th</sup> as National Vietnam War Veterans Day, let's create a ***Heroes' Grove*** on the banks of the Codorus to honor all who served, from our nation's founders forging a fragile first constitution here in Yorktown, through our servicemen and women serving in two World Wars, and to the fight against terrorism today.

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Friends, I'm a little girl from Penn Street who remembers National Guard Tanks rumbling through my neighborhood 50 years ago.

That little Head Start girl grew up to graduate from our William Penn Senior High School, to honorably serve her country in the United States Air Force, and to come back home to serve her neighbors in our York.

That girl grew up to see our York grow up from a provincial burg to an economic powerhouse, a multicultural mosaic, and a beacon of light throughout Pennsylvania and beyond.

My friends, more than ever, I'm honored and privileged to carry the torch of our great York. And, rest assured, the torch-fire within me to serve you and all people burns brighter, bolder and fiercer than ever.

Friends, I ask for your support to continue our march forward for all Yorkers.

Our dream to achieve the great Civil rights goals of the 21<sup>st</sup> century never dissipates, never dims, never dies:

- The end to senseless gun violence;
- Pre-K for all;
- Quality education for all;
- Access to fresh, nutritious food for all;
- A clean and green Codorus and air quality for all;
- Destroying the cycle of poverty; and
- Zipcode Justice.

Please join me in our marathon quest for a greater, brighter York where a river of economic and social justice runs through all of us, a York that burns with liberty, justice, opportunity and prosperity for all. Make no small plans, my friends, and always, always, run with the rapids!

“May one York be with you.

May our future York

Swim in your restless, unrelenting soul.”

Thank you.