
CITY COUNCIL



Good evening,

To my colleagues on the council, city staff, and the residents of this great city, I rise tonight to present to you the State of the City address.

In the past, we have rated the State of the City in terms of doing great, doing good, etc. Tonight, I will not be doing this. Instead, I will say, the city is moving in the right direction.

We have come a long way; I am sure we can all agree that we still have work to do.

We have accomplished a lot, and we must stay the course. Over my 20+ years on this council, I have witnessed challenges and successes.

I tell you tonight, we have had several successes this year and a few challenges.

I give thanks to all the councilors and city staff for all your hard work that you do each and every day to move the city forward.

Thanks to all the residents who have put your trust in us to do the right thing. Let's keep the momentum going.

When I look back over this year, I cannot be disappointed with the work that was done by the council and the entire city staff. Great strides were made to move the city forward. I would like to take a moment to highlight just a few things.

Who can forget the naming and celebration of the USS Beloit commissioning? What an honor this was, I would like to thank everyone who played a part in making this happen.

We can't forget the PBS Wisconsin documentary about the history of Beloit. What a great way for others to learn what we already know: that we have an awesome city.

Finally, we waited and waited and waited and waited some more and it finally happened. The casino is finally here. Thanks to all staff members who helped make this a reality and to the community members who have been so patient with this project.

Let's look at three areas: crime, housing, and homelessness. I am going to just do a high-level review.

We often hear that crime is bad in the city. Well, we had a 7.3 percent decrease in crimes. Some will say, "that's great. How about clearance rates?"

This is a great question, our clearance rates for crimes increased over the past few years. This is partly due to the 3.5 percent increase in tips received by Crimestoppers. Finally, the police department continues to develop strong partnerships with Community Action's Fresh Start Program students where they serve as mentors and build lasting relationships.

Last year's graduation rate for this program was 100 percent.

Our police and fire departments continue to build community relationships. They are often seen at community events providing knowledge about public safety and providing demonstrations.

Let's take a look at housing. The city created 8 new residential development contacts. We have a new financial incentive in place to promote residential development through a TIF Housing Fund that

- Provided \$6 million for affordable rental housing creation
- Allocated \$363,000 for downtown upper floor housing grants
- Sold the Western Hills subdivision to Acadia Homes for single family home development
- Introduced a roof replacement program
- Introduced a \$1 million market rate housing

Other housing updates include:

- 47 parcels under contract for new housing
- 48 housing units added to inventory or under contract to build.

In hand with housing, is helping those who are facing homelessness in our community. The city committed \$2 million in ARPA funds for the Next Steps Family Resilience Center, which will provide transitional housing, wrap around services and childcare for unhoused individuals.

Nearly 2,300 people have been served through the ARPA homelessness services and prevention program funding allocated by the city. 231 people were provided overnight shelter through this funding.

These are just a few highlights of the accomplishments over the years.

I could go on all night about all the work that has taken place in all the departments because they are working hard daily to make this the best city in the world and it is greatly appreciated. So, councilors if you would join me in giving staff a round of applause for their dedication and hard work. It does not go unnoticed.

So, in closing I would like to say I am proud to lead such a great group of councilors and partner with city staff and residents as we continue to push to make this the best city to live, work, and play.

Kevin D. Leavy
City Council President