



PEDRO E. SEGARRA
MAYOR

State of the City **March 9, 2015**

Council President Shawn Wooden, Majority Leader Aponte, Minority Leader Cruz, Hartford City Council, Treasurer Adam Cloud, to the men and women, and young people of Hartford and Honored Guests: It is my privilege to share with you the State of our City for 2015.

Before we begin...This is the first time we have all been together since our City suffered a great loss.

We lost Kevin Bell, a First Responder, in the line of duty. He was a Hartford native, and a member of our community.

He was one of us and he will not be forgotten.

I'd like to take a moment of silence to honor Kevin, his family and all of our First Responders who risk their lives each and every day to keep us safe.

In recent years, this annual address has started with a look back at the things we have accomplished together. While this certainly has been a year of historic accomplishment, I really want to focus on where we are today, and also on what's ahead.

Last year I laid out a vision for our City built on making Hartford one of the best capital Cities in America. Today, we're well on our way. There is a powerful momentum, like we haven't seen in years.

THE STATE OF OUR CITY IS STRONG AND GETTING STRONGER!

There is so much progress, so much change, so much happening in our City right now. That's true in education, in economic development, in public safety, our libraries, in our parks, and in key initiatives across our city.

Hartford is the economic driver of the region. Over 60,000 commuters come here to work every day. We are a city of more than 120,000 people – people whose affection for this city, commitment to this city, and whose remarkable contributions to the vibrancy of this city, is quite extraordinary.

Jamie McDonald, Where's Jamie? Is he here? Jamie is the owner of Bears Smokehouse right around the corner. Bears, as many of you probably know, serves delicious barbecue. But you might not know, is that when hundreds of out of state Firefighters who came to honor Kevin needed food, Bears eagerly jumped in and provided hundreds of free hot meals.

You might not know that they proudly hire Hartford residents --- boast about it in fact. Many of whom are folks working for a second chance.

Those are the kinds of businesses and people we have here. I want to thank you being here and for your delicious BBQ!

The Hartford City Council and our administration is improving the way we conduct business and changing our City for the better.

However, we will never be satisfied unless Hartford works for everyone. *Until* every single person in Hartford from every neighborhood has the opportunity to be successful, we will never be the city we are meant to be, the city we can be.

That is what drives our commitment and that is what drives our decisions.

Our downtown district and our neighborhoods are working better than ever because of the significant investments we've made across the City.

- ✓ In the South End, we spent over \$700,000 dollars rehabilitating Goodwin Park Golf Course. It's back to being a source of pride for the neighborhood and it drives local tourism.
- ✓ The South End will soon be the home of a Historic National Park. Finally, after many years, Coltsville was given National Park status. Thank you, Congressman Larson and our Federal Delegation.
- ✓ We invested over \$12 million in Coltsville including \$4.4 million for neighborhood streetscapes and \$5 million for 79 new residential units in the South Armory.
- ✓ In the West End, we finally started the Farmington Avenue Streetscape project that extends from South Marshall to Sherman Street. It's a \$4 million dollar project, work began last spring, and the area between South Marshall and Woodland Street has been completed.
- ✓ In the North End, we've made even more investments in the last several years. And that's because the North End is an area of our city that was long neglected but that has always had a resilient spirit.
- ✓ In the North End, \$100 million is being invested in renovations at Weaver High School. In this year's CIP another including \$68 million is being allocated for renovations at Martin Luther King-- a decision our City Council rightfully expedited.
- ✓ We completed a \$3 million renovation of the North End Senior Center last August. This was the first time significant improvements were made to the center since 1991.

- ✓ This year, we begin construction on a \$1.5 million new police sub-station on Coventry Street.
- ✓ After many delays, this October we'll have 80 new units of affordable housing in Nelton Court.
- ✓ Over \$10million dollars has been invested in the restoration of Keney Park. That includes \$8.3 million for the actual golf course, and almost \$2 million for the new cricket fields and four baseball fields at Keney Waverly. This year we're including \$4 million for Club House improvements in our CIP. I want to acknowledge our partners - KNOX and the Connecticut PGA for their work on this huge project.
- ✓ I am asking the State to expedite funding, so we can implement the \$14 million dollar Albany Avenue streetscapes that we've been talking about for years.

And together we made one of the most important investments of all - - partnering with our community in the North End we were able to achieve a 53 percent decrease in homicides since 2011.

We know these numbers can fluctuate but we cannot ignore where they are today.

Nothing is more important than the safety of our neighborhoods. And I'm proud of what we have accomplished together with our Police Department and our community.

We can unequivocally confirm that OUR CITY is safer now than it has been in decades. That is really the anchor of our progress.

We've achieved progress because of our emphasis on community policing and the strengthening of our residents' relationship with police.

This was a difficult year for law enforcement, for communities of color around the country, for many of us here. What happened in Ferguson, what happened in Staten Island, what happened in Brooklyn scared us.

It brought out old wounds. It reminded us that there are a lot of areas that still need to be improved.

We have had candid conversations with the community that were tense and often uncomfortable, but that we believe were critical.

City Council, our administration, the community and the Police are committed to working on improving relationships and continuing to have these tough conversations

These discussions continue with what we're calling "Courageous Community Conversations with Our Cops" in partnership with Reverend Brown and Mothers United Against Violence and others.

Under the diligent leadership of Chief Rovella we have become a model for cities across the State. But the police's efforts would never have been effective without the support of the Hartford community. There are some key civilians who shoulder this burden of keeping us safe and I want to acknowledge them: Reverend Henry Brown, Pastor Sam Saylor, Bishop Jeremiah Torres & Senior Pastor Miriam L. Torres from the House of Restoration, Reverend Camp from Faith Congregational, Rabbi Donna Berman and individuals like Andrew Woods, Iran Nazario and many more.

We are also honored to be joined today by the students from Law and Government Academy and CREC Public Safety Academy.

Please stand.

These students are members of our Public Safety Program and our CREC Public Safety Academy. These young people of Hartford are our pipeline to new public safety staff. These amazing kids can be our next generation of Hartford Police Officers, our next Hartford Firefighters our next First Responders.

You are the future of our city. And absolutely everything we talked about today is to provide you with opportunities in the future. We are opening doors. It's up to you to walk through them.

I want to thank you.

In just over a month, I will present a budget to City Council and together we will work hard to adopt a balanced budget just like we have each and every year.

Our fiscal situation presents serious challenges.

For this next fiscal year, we need to close a gap of approximately \$48 million dollars. The budget gap is driven primarily by a significant reduction in revenues, increasing debt service and collective bargaining agreements.

As Connecticut's Capital City, almost half of our entire general fund comes from the State. Our calculations indicate that we will receive \$5.1 million dollars less than last year based on the Governor's proposed budget. The newly discovered \$100 million State deficit in this current year makes us, like other cities, very nervous. There are a lot of unanswered questions and we will need to adopt our budget before the State finishes theirs.

Half of our funding goes to our schools, as it should, leaving us with little remaining to provide the level of services our community needs, deserves and expects.

Those of you who have participated in The People's Budget – a hands on workshop created by our friends at Hartford2000- know exactly what I'm talking about.

So, how do we solve this problem? How do we bring more revenue into Hartford?"

This challenge is not new. But how we have dealt with it for the past five years is new. We could have raised taxes or slashed spending indiscriminately. But we didn't do either.

Instead, we made bold decisions. We took risks and made it part of our core mission to get people excited about Hartford again. We bet our

money on our City's vitality and focused our energy on improving Hartford in ways that attract more people and more businesses.

And it worked. Hartford is working better than it has in decades. Our investments and our decisions are paying off.

For now, we have to once again hold the line as we have tough budgetary conversations over the next two months.

These conversations will take place here and at the Legislature. Fortunately, we have a strong Hartford Delegation, and they have done an incredible job as we worked together to fight for our capital city. Senator Fonfara, Senator Coleman, Representative Ritter, Representative McCrory, Representative Gonzalez, Representative Vargas, Representative McGee, and Representative Arce. Our capital city has progressed because of your commitment.

Budgets, in my mind, must be viewed as investments in our future. All of us care about Hartford's future. Our Hartford Delegation, our City Council, our Treasurer, and our Department Heads, will come together again, defy the odds, and protect the city we care so much about.

The difference *this year* is that we're starting from a better place. Today, we are actively attracting private developers who share our vision for Hartford.

Today, our City has received its lowest borrowing cost in decades thanks to the leadership and management of our Treasurer Adam Cloud. Our General Obligation bonds sold at a historically low interest rate of just over three percent, proving that our credit is strong.

What I can proudly tell you is that as a result of our work together, more development and investment in the Capital City is on the way.

A few weeks ago we broke ground on a historic project for Hartford.

Downtown North will be a new neighborhood, with new apartments, a supermarket, retail, businesses and it will be the home of our new professional baseball team.

Together we literally made something out of nothing.

And we all learned a lot from the process. First, it reminded us that Hartford can be daring and we can take risks when we have to. Our City hadn't negotiated a project of that size in decades. We knew that Downtown North would generate economic activity, but we needed to make sure our residents also profit from the project in a way that's tangible and sustainable.

And I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge Council President Shawn Wooden in particular, as well as the majority of this Council for their tireless work on this project and all of its tough issues. Councilman Kennedy, Councilman Aponte, Councilwoman Jennings, Councilman Andersen, Councilman Cruz, Councilman Deutsch, Councilman DeJesus, and Councilman McDonald. Whether on one side or the other, we have engaged in a process that has moved us ahead.

It's because of their efforts and their commitment that this project is where it is today, and that our residents **will** significantly gain from this historic development.

At every turn, the project plan became stronger, because we stayed at it, and because our residents worked with us, keeping the city's best interests at heart. I want to thank every resident who expressed an opinion, reviewed our plans, and shared their ideas.

We learned and we are incorporating these lessons for the development and investment that is coming our way.

To leverage the new economic activity, I am proposing the creation of a **Community Benefits Policy** for all major public construction projects in the City of Hartford. This means that significant projects that require the City's aid will get the support they need **and** ensure that residents and local businesses benefit from them.

A citywide Community Benefits Policy will become our policy to make sure that big projects provide economic and social benefits to our Hartford community, especially in the neighborhoods where they are

located. This could be anything from job training to hiring, to setting aside contracts for minority and women owned businesses, to funding for education and arts programs.

In the past, we didn't have a comprehensive and clearly articulated policy. Now we will. The excellent work done recently by the Hartford Hires Task Force with Downtown North will serve as a model. I want to thank Councilwoman Cynthia Jennings for her leadership on this issue. Hiring local residents and minority and women contractors are a top priority. Similarly, securing good union jobs and strong labor agreements in all our projects will be a top priority.

For the City to have successful Community Benefits Policy in place we need effective monitoring and enforcement. My proposal includes proper staffing to monitor and track the progress.

In the coming weeks, I will submit a proposal to Council and we will work together to get this done.

My friends, Hartford is growing. We feel the excitement. We just need to make sure our own community gains from that excitement in a way that's real and meaningful.

Hartford is the economic driver of the region - - more so now than ever. We are laying the foundation now for the future stability of our City.

And the single best investment we can make in the future of Hartford is in the education of our children.

Today, seven out of 10 students graduate high school. In 2006, it was 3 out of 10. In the next four years, we want that number to increase and be the same as surrounding towns.

We've made investment in early childhood education a priority and for the last several years, over 70% of our students have been enrolled in early education programs. In the next four years our goal is 100 percent. Our Pre-K is offered on a sliding scale so no parent has to choose between sending their child to school or paying for electricity.

I want to take a moment to thank our Superintendent Beth Schiavino-Narvaez, our Principals, our teachers, the parents who are engaged, our Board of Education, our Department of Children and Families, for making this progress possible. They deserve praise and our continued support.

Upgrading our schools has been a consistent priority. In 2012, \$75 million was invested in school construction, in 2013 we opened four schools - MD FOX, Quirk, Journalism and Media, and the Asian Studies at Bellizzi - with a \$65 million investment, in 2014 we invested \$25 million and in 2015 we'll invest \$85 million. Currently, both West Middle and Hartford Magnet at Trinity are undergoing significant renovations.

We need to fight hard to protect the reputation of our schools so that our students can hold their head high when they graduate from Hartford.

We owe it to our students to do what is best for them.

The best way to achieve long-term economic stability and a balanced budget is to have an educated, skilled workforce cultivated and grown within our own schools.

Each and every year we grow our Summer Youth employment program. Since 2011 we've serviced over 6,000 students. That's one of the reasons, Hartford won first place in the National Summer Youth Jobs Challenge.

In four years, our goal is to double this number. I want to acknowledge Capital Workforce for their continued partnership.

The better we prepare our kids to enter a competitive workforce, the better our city will be.

We know that cities are the economic engine of our country.

A recent study compared Downtown Hartford with cities like New York and Chicago in job creation and retention.

People are noticing what's going on here. Here is what The Atlantic's *City Lab* had to say about Hartford - and I quote because I love the phrasing so much:

"But there exists at least one place where younger workers are doing quite a bit better than these national trends suggest—a city that boasts both higher average wages and a lower average cost of living. It's a magical land of opportunity called ... Hartford?"

When you dig into the numbers, the Hartford, Connecticut, metro area emerges, beaconlike, in the darkness: It has become one of the most lucrative job markets for young Americans."

Let me repeat that: **Hartford has become one of the most lucrative job markets for young Americans. (pause)**

This statement captures how we have defied the odds and moved our City forward.

But it is not an exaggeration by any means. Our Downtown residential occupancy is at 97 percent. By the end of this year we'll have added over 600 new units of housing and we will double our number of units in the next three years.

There's a new restaurant- - Siam Hartford - -who jumped at the opportunity to move to Downtown saying the location has, and I quote "the potential for a lot of business over the next several years with the baseball park coming."

In so many critical ways, we've made progress over the last few years, but we will never be satisfied until that progress is felt in every single part of our city.

Yes, we are creating jobs in Downtown but it's not good enough. We need to create good paying jobs in our neighborhoods and one of the best ways to do that is by supporting our small businesses.

Since we started expedited permitting, we have cut down the time businesses spend in City Hall. Right now, 55 percent of our permits get

executed on the same day up from 4% in 2012, and 79 percent of them within 30 days up from 30%. By November online permitting will be available to help businesses focus on what really matters - - growing their business and getting more customers.

Entrepreneurs see opportunities where others don't. They drive job creation, here in Hartford and across the country. We rely on them to challenge us to think differently.

We have many in Hartford who are pushing our City forward. I want to acknowledge some of them; Rich Hollant, of CoLab, located in Parkville; Dick Stevens of Severance Foods and Gina Muslim of Community Solutions at Swift Factory both in the North End; Mark Borton of Hartford Health Works, all the folks from ReSet , Kurt Fromherz from Sunrise Marketing who are innovating every day.

We are as invested in you as you are in our City. We chose to use our \$1 million dollar innovation hub grant to invest back in our entrepreneurs because we want to put our money where our mouth is. The next round of SC2 finalists will be announced next month.

We launched our first revitalization campaign called "Hello Parkville" to promote the neighborhood, but especially to drive customers to our local businesses. Street banners and new smart phone technology are all a part of it. And we worked with one of our small businesses- Sunrise Marketing, which has been in Parkville for years - to come up with the concept.

Being a public servant is a privilege, And I think all of us who do this work can best be judged by one basic analysis: Is our City better now than when we started? What has been done, and how has it impacted the lives of people who live in this city?

I think seeing is believing.

Today, we've learned from the past, we're working together, and listening.

Today, you see construction. You see cranes making critical improvements and upgrades to our infrastructure. You see people working to improve our streets.

You see moving trucks, unloading belongings from people moving into the City, not away from it.

Today, you see storefronts that were previously empty filling up with new retail stores and businesses.

You see leading companies in industries from accounting to product design, that have changed their address, leaving the suburbs for new convenient locations in the urban core.

Today, you see revitalized public parks, a new library on Albany Avenue, an nationally acclaimed and award winning library next door, new athletic fields, and of course, restaurants and more restaurants.

Today, you see construction on a home for Hartford's new professional baseball team.

And this happened because we worked together. Our Council President Shawn Wooden, the majority of this Council, our Treasurer, our partners in organized labor like 32BJ, our friends New England Regional Council of Carpenters, our friends at the Greater Hartford New Britain Trades Council, and the people of Hartford came together and decided in the words of Mr. Stan McCauley that, "We needed to 'stop apologizing' and proclaim that 'the City of Hartford is open for business'."

Some have said that government often moves too slowly. Well, look around. To them, we say **if you want results, and get work done quickly and efficiently....**

COME- TO- HARTFORD.

The State of Our City is Strong...The State of Our City is that Hartford Has Made a Comeback! And you are a part of it.

I understand that every problem is not solved, and that we still have serious challenges ahead of us.

But that should not stop us from moving forward and working to reach our full potential.

I believe in Hartford, always have, always will. We're on our way to being the nation's best Capital City. When we listen to each other, when we invest in each other, when we're not scared to try, we win.

And we are winning.

Hartford is winning.

I look forward to winning well into the future.