

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
Friday, March 9, 2018
Holiday Inn Chicago North-Evanston
Evanston, Illinois
by
Mayor Stephen Hagerty

Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for being here for my first State of the City address. I know Joe Biden is also speaking in Evanston today, so thank you for choosing to be here with me instead.

Before we begin, I want to thank my wife, Lisa. Without her support, I wouldn't be the mayor of one of the finest urban ring cities in America. So thank you, Lisa.

By the way, Lisa didn't know Joe Biden was speaking in Evanston today, so that's why she's here.

Thank you to the Evanston Chamber of Commerce and the Holiday Inn for hosting us today in this beautiful, renovated space.

For the first time ever, the State of the City is going to be a Zero Waste event. That means all of your leftovers—if there are any—will be composted and diverted from the landfill. Thank you to Erlene Howard and Collective Resource for making this happen.

I also want to thank our incredibly talented and dedicated City Council for being here and for guiding our city on so many important issues over the last year.

I know a few of them couldn't make it today. They're probably at Joe Biden's speech instead. Still, let's give each of them one clap for their hard work. We have a lot of clapping to do today, so follow me.

1st Ward Alderman Judy Fiske

2nd Ward Alderman Peter Braithwaite

3rd Ward Alderman Melissa Wynne

4th Ward Alderman Don Wilson

5th Ward Alderman Robin Rue Simmons

6th Ward Alderman Tom Suffredin

7th Ward Alderman Eleanor Revelle

8th Ward Alderman Ann Rainey

9th Ward Alderman Cicely Fleming

Well done, everyone.

I also want to acknowledge our City Clerk, Devon Reid. Let's give him a clap. And don't forget that early voting is now underway at the Morton Civic Center through Monday, March 19th.

Thank you to our Cook County Commissioner, Larry Suffredin, who's a great partner for the City.

Evanston is fortunate to be represented in our state government by some very dedicated public servants who share our community's values. Let's give a clap for State Representative Laura Fine, who's a candidate for State Senator. Representative Robyn Gabel. Representative Kelly Cassidy. Senator Heather Steans. And Governor – I mean Senator - Daniel Biss. Thank you all for representing Evanston's best interests in Springfield.

I also want to thank those who represent us in Washington, DC: Jan Schakowsky. And by the way, I borrowed this whole clapping thing from Jan. Senator Dick Durbin. And Senator Tammy Duckworth. Tammy will soon become the first U.S. Senator to give birth while in office. Tammy is represented here today by her Chief of Staff, Kaitlin Fahey, who is also a new resident of Evanston. That's worthy of a clap.

Morton Schapiro is here. Let's give a clap for Morty. As many of you know, Morty is the president of Northwestern University. He also owns more purple sweaters than all of us combined in this room. Looking good, Morty. Thank you for all that you and your amazing Northwestern team have done and continue to do for our city.

Thank you also to Superintendents Paul Goren, Eric Witherspoon, and our District 65 and 202 School Board Members. Let's give a big clap for all of these dedicated public servants who have our kids' best interests at heart every day. Also, how about a big clap for Candace Chow, a current District 65 school board member who's running for Laura Fine's 17th District Illinois House seat.

Evanston's first responders-in-chief are here. Police Chief Richard Eddington, Fire Chief Brian Scott, and retired Fire Chief Greg Klaiber. Let's give them a clap. Thank you for serving our community.

Evanston has an incredible public library system working to improve literacy in our community. Thank you to our Library Director, Karen Danczak-Lyons. Let's give Karen a clap.

And finally, thank you to our amazing City staff, including our City Manager Wally Bobkiewicz, for providing the outstanding services that we count on each and every day. Let's give them a clap.

Now that I've acknowledged practically half the room, let's give a big clap for everyone else. The fact is that this is YOUR City. Everyone in this room is a contributor. Everyone in this room owns Evanston. And when you feel that sense of ownership, it means the problems are yours as well as the opportunities.

Let me give just one simple example to illustrate my point. With the exception of new parents, most of us don't think much about Baby Wipes. Yes, you heard me right. Baby Wipes.

There's someone in this room, however, that does: Sophia Lindsey, a 6th Grader at King Arts. Sophia is the artist of that scary flyer on your table.

I met Sophia and her entire class at the Civic Center in November where they presented their science projects to Dave Stoneback, Kumar Jensen, the City's sustainability coordinator, and me. These kids were talented, smart, and genuinely concerned about water and waste. They were also adamant that baby wipes should never go in the toilet. I mean, just look at that flyer.

It was an important message and one that should be heard beyond the Parasol Room. That's why I'm proud to report today that the flyer Sophia presented back in November is now not only on your tables but, more importantly, in the go-kits that both of our hospitals – St. Francis and Evanston Hospital – send home with newborn parents.

I share this story because it demonstrates that each of us, whether we're a kid, a hospital administrator, or even a Mayor, can make a small difference in our community by acting together.

Let's give one big clap for Sophia and her mom, Priscilla, who's with us today, and our hospitals, which welcome thousands of newborns and their families each year. Thank you for reminding us of the difference each of us can make when we apply our talents, take initiative, and partner together.

So now, I'd like to talk about our collective achievements and our opportunities moving forward.

I'm happy to report that the state of our City is strong. Our jobless rate is down to 3.8 percent. More than 80 new businesses opened their doors in our city last year, including not one but two poke restaurants. We're taking action on important issues like climate change, immigration, social justice, and affordable housing. And just today, Evanston was officially recertified as a 4-STAR community by the STAR Community Rating System; the first community in the nation to be recertified at that level. If you're unfamiliar with STAR, that's like winning a gold medal at the Winter Olympics – in the most difficult event, let's say the snowboarding Halfpipe - for the most sustainable city and county governments – and we've done it not once but twice now. You could say, we are the Shaun White of the STAR Community Rating System.

And one of the best barometers of our health - people want to be here. Evanston was named a "Top 100 Best Place to Live" in the nation by Livability.com, and number one in Illinois. Take that, Chicago. Downtown Evanston is one of the "Top 6 Coolest Downtowns" according to Expedia, and it'll soon be even cooler – literally on a hot summer day it will be cooler - with our newly renovated Fountain Square. USA Today ranked Evanston as a "Top 5 Place to Retire," and we continue to make our city age friendly. Redfin listed Evanston 10th on its list of "Neighborhoods That Have It All." And of course, most importantly, we have the best barbecue sauce in America thanks to Hecky Powell.

I'm not sure how official any of these rankings really are, but the fact is, people are taking notice of our city. They want to live here. They want to eat, drink and be entertained here. They want to visit our beautiful lakefront, our world-class university, and our museums. And they want to try Hecky's sauce.

As a city, our challenge is to keep that momentum going. To keep looking for opportunities to build our city's future, while also preserving the values and the identity that make Evanston unique. It's a delicate balance. But the future of our city depends on it.

Our work on climate change is a perfect example. Evanston has long been a leader on environmental issues, but we have to keep building on our progress to remain one.

This December, I joined the mayors of Paris, Chicago, Mexico City, Vancouver and other major cities at the Global Covenant of Mayors North American Climate Summit. Think about that: Paris, Chicago, Mexico City, Vancouver. While we don't have nearly the same resources as those cities, it doesn't stop us from leading. Evanston is a city that boxes way above its weight. We don't back down from the big issues facing our community and our world.

And we continue to make progress. As a community, we've reduced emissions in this city by almost 20% relative to 2005 levels, and we've pledged to do even better, setting a goal of at least a 28% reduction by 2025 in accordance with the Paris Climate Accord.

In June, our City Council approved a three-year contract for 100 percent renewable energy for all Evanston households and small businesses who'd like to participate. That's in line with my commitment to the Sierra Club's Mayors for 100% Clean Energy campaign.

We formed a new Climate Action and Resilience Plan Working Group – also known as CARP. That's much, much better than Climate Resilience Action Plan group, which would give us a less savory acronym. But that group is creating a plan to continue moving our city forward. Protecting our environment is key to building and preserving the future of our beloved Evanston.

Our future also depends on having a balanced budget. Despite challenges, we have a balanced City budget for 2018. In December, our City Council approved a \$335 million budget, closing a \$6 million dollar shortfall. It wasn't easy. It meant hard choices affecting both staff and operations. It meant shared sacrifices from everyone, including our labor unions.

It's no secret that our City budget and the state budget will continue to be challenged in the years to come. Later this month, we'll begin our 2019 budget discussion in order to meet those challenges. That's about six months earlier than we normally begin to talk about the budget. If we want to remain a diverse community and be able to take advantage of the opportunities that exist, we'll have to make hard choices and accept sacrifices.

But the good news is, our local economy is strong, Evanston remains a desirable place to live and work, and businesses want to invest here despite our challenges.

One of the reasons the road ahead is positive is in your water glasses. In fact, let's all raise our glasses to Dave Stoneback. Dave, our Public Works Director, literally gets excited when he sees us drinking water. And, by the way, don't forget that each of us should drink at least 8 glasses a day – half a gallon. So drink up! It's good for your body and our City.

Our friends in Niles and Morton Grove will soon be drinking Evanston water. Thanks to Dave, our City Attorney Grant Farrar, and our City Manager, by the end of this year, and continuing for the next 40 years, Evanston will be selling water to Niles and Morton Grove. That will mean an estimated \$800,000 in additional revenue in 2019, rising to an estimated \$1.4 million in 2020. It's a huge win for Evanston. It's an investment in our future. And it's great news for Niles and Morton Grove, too.

And speaking of great news, this fall, I met with President Schapiro to discuss Northwestern's third straight \$1 million contribution to our Good Neighbor Fund.

- 45 percent, or \$450,000, will go towards improving our City facilities and infrastructure, including interior renovations to the Fleetwood-Jourdain Center and the basketball court at Harbert Park.
- 22 percent, or \$220,000, will support Evanston Fire Department paramedic services, so that their quick response can continue to save lives.
- And finally, 33 percent, or \$330,000, will support Evanston youth and social services, including a full-time social worker at the Library, two full-time outreach workers in our Youth & Young Adult Division, and support for existing job training programs.

We can't underestimate the value of jobs for our young people. Jobs provide experience. Jobs provide confidence. Jobs provide a start. And, as many students reminded me at last week's job fair, they put money in your pocket.

As Mayor, there are times when I miss the simple days of riding my bike as a nine-year-old Attleboro Sun Chronicle paperboy. But that job was a stepping stone to the next job and the next opportunity.

On Saturday, we held the 26th annual Mayor's Summer Youth Job Fair at ETHS. More than 40 employers participated, offering more than 1,000 jobs. I think it's time for another clap, and this time for Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl, whose leadership helped make the job fair the incredible success that it is today. Let's give her a clap.

But our work is about more than just providing jobs – it's about building careers, and building futures. Last Thursday, thanks to City and school leadership, and community members like Neil Gambow, the City partnered with ETHS, Oakton Community College and Rotary International to host a Career Options Night, introducing students and adults to careers in advanced manufacturing and other areas.

We've also partnered with ETHS on a new Water Distribution Operator-In-Training program, giving two students a jump start on a fantastic career. Thanks to Bureau Chief Darrell King for leading the charge on that program.

And kids, if you stick to the water business, you too can have a lakefront office just like Darrell. This is a perk that no other City job – including mayor – offers!

Just next door to the water plant, Northwestern has hired 18 residents to full-time positions as part of the Skilled Trades Program, generating nearly three quarters of a million dollars in wages.

The Evanston Work Ethic Program, led by Hecky Powell and Nancy Baker, is providing mentoring and training to students pursuing vocational and technical careers.

Our partnership with the Youth Job Center has provided job training to more than 100 community members in the last five years, with nearly 80 percent finding permanent employment.

And the list goes on: The Moran Center, Cradle to Career, Curt's Cafe, the National Able Network, Northwestern, ETHS, Oakton Community College – there are so many organizations working to support our young people, and in turn, the future of our city. Now, the time has come time to bring those efforts together under one roof.

That's why today, I'm proud to announce the launch of Elevate Evanston, a citywide initiative uniting our community's efforts to connect individuals with employment opportunities, job training, and career education.

If you're looking for a job, visit ElevateEvanston.org and browse the many, many resources and opportunities throughout our community.

If you're a business owner or an organization who'd like to join this mission, visit the website and let us know how you can help.

Young people are our future. We need to work hard to provide them – and all residents – with pathways to success.

And thanks to our collective efforts, including those of our police department, our community remains safe.

The number of people shot in Evanston dropped from 16 in 2016, to three in 2017. Understandably, that's still three too many. Our police department took 38 guns off the street last year. Violent crime is down. That's not a coincidence.

Still, we lost a young man, Yakez Semark, 20 years old recently to gun violence. The State's Attorney has charged two young men with First Degree Murder. Families are hurting, lives are forever changed, and so many people and organizations in this community who are working hard to curb violence and the underlying root causes are frustrated.

We must continue the comprehensive efforts we are taking towards youth development, public safety, and helping each child in this community grow to lead a healthy, happy, and productive adult life.

While violent crime is down, property crime, like theft, is up. Our police department constantly reminds us – and I think it's worth repeating – lock your doors and windows. Crimes of convenience are a little too convenient!

After a successful pilot program last fall, this January the police department rolled out its body camera program. Every Evanston police officer in the field now wears a body camera, and the Northwestern Police Department is doing the same.

In fact, I'm wearing one now, and I'll be reviewing the tape later to see which of you laughed at my jokes and applauded. I bet you wish you knew that earlier.

Body cameras are another tool – not the only tool, but another tool – to improve transparency, accountability and trust in government.

Our Citizen Police Complaint Assessment Committee, which we still need a better name for, is also helping to do that.

Our Alternatives to Arrest Committee is drafting policies that offer alternatives to arrest for non-violent misdemeanor offenses. For too many young people, one mistake prevents them from getting that first

job, that first scholarship, or that first opportunity to succeed. For all youth, potential is unlimited, but opportunity is not. Our job in Evanston is to try to close the gap between potential and opportunity.

And that's why the work of our Equity and Empowerment Commission is so important. The commission held its very first meeting this January. Thank you to Doctor Patricia Efiom and the Equity and Empowerment Commission for embarking on this critical mission.

In October, I was proud to sign an updated Welcoming City Ordinance, which was approved unanimously by our City Council. It provides that all residents and visitors be treated with respect, dignity and due process, regardless of their immigration status. Here in Evanston, we stand up for and with our neighbors.

So we welcome all people, but keeping Evanston affordable continues to be a challenge. However, it is one that our City is attempting to address.

As a City, we need to be intentional and work hard to maintain our socio-economic diversity. It's why many of us choose to live here, and it's one of the characteristics that makes this a special place.

As a result of projects approved in 2016 and 2017, we'll see 23 new affordable housing units and \$2.4 million added to the affordable housing fund in the coming years.

This year, we'll continue to explore ways to expand affordable housing options to address the needs of low-, moderate- and middle-income households in our community. I look forward to reporting back on our City Council's adopted strategies next year.

A big part of the reason we struggle with affordability is that Evanston is a desirable place to live. And desirable cities need great community gathering places. That's why our City Council is committed to building a new Robert Crown Community Center and Library. We're on track to break ground this summer, with completion of the building targeted for the fall of 2019, and completion of the playing fields by spring of 2020.

My deep thanks to Friends of Robert Crown and all who've donated to turn this dream into a reality. Friends of Crown has raised \$11 million dollars so far, with a new fundraising goal of \$15 million. Those funds will cover roughly a third of the cost of the Center, taking that burden off the shoulders of taxpayers, and frankly, making this project a possibility.

When complete, the new Robert Crown Center is going to be a great space for our residents and a magnet for our community. Who knows? It may even produce a future Olympian.

But a new Robert Crown Center costs money. In fact, all of the things we love about Evanston – our great schools, our public transportation, our parks, human services – they all come with a price tag. And as we know, our property taxes, which the City receives about 20 percent of, are already high.

That's why economic development is so important. Attracting new businesses, employers, visitors, and residents helps pay for the things we love. It increases our tax base without increasing our taxes. It's a vehicle to have the diverse, vibrant city we want to have.

That's why I smile every time I see Evanston making positive headlines, like being named "One of America's Best Suburbs for People Who Like to Eat." Looking at your plates, I think that includes just about everyone in this room.

I smile when I hear that 82 new businesses opened their doors here last year, including North Shore Cider on Howard Street and Beer on Central on Central Street. Apparently, Evanston enjoys a beverage or two.

Our smallest food truck, Amanecer Tacos, opened a brick and mortar store on Main Street. Pet owners have two new pet supply shops to keep their animals happy. The beautiful, new Halim Time and Glass Museum opened on Oak Avenue. There's a new Mexican restaurant in town, Ovo Frito Cafe, that's becoming a go-to place for breakfast. And there's plenty more excitement to come in 2018.

Binny's is looking to open a new store on Chicago Avenue in the former Whole Foods space. Apparently, they got the memo that Evanston enjoys a beverage or two.

Target is celebrating the grand opening of its new, small-format store in Sherman Plaza this Sunday, giving us another convenient place to shop. They also hired students from ETHS and Northwestern. Thank you, Target, for elevating Evanston.

Evanston coffee drinkers, I know you're excited. Colectivo – a Milwaukee coffee company – is opening its first Evanston location at Sherman and Church, just down the block from Target in the old Radio Shack space. I walk past that space every day, and even though I'm not a coffee drinker, I'm excited to see those ugly white window panels finally go away. We should always look for opportunities to beautify our city.

Our Howard Street renaissance continues. Cafe Coralie opened last month in the old police department outpost. And you would never know that space used to be a police outpost – it's spectacular. As Alderman Rainey said: "We're trading crime for croissants." Let's give a clap for our most senior Alderman, Ann Rainey, who you can always count on for a witty quote. Good to Go will be serving Jamaican cuisine on our side of the Evanston/Chicago border soon. Likewise, Theo Ubique is looking to bring its dinner theater from Chicago to Evanston.

All of these businesses are great amenities for residents, while bringing others to our community to eat, drink, shop, be entertained, and spend money.

Fountain Square is another one of those amenities. We've already seen the beautiful new south plaza being used, and it's not even summer yet. What was once an underutilized space has now been activated, creating a better experience for everyone. And to those businesses that are in the downtown area, thank you for your patience. I know this construction has not been a joyful or profitable experience to live through.

Ground just broke at 831 Emerson Street, eventually bringing up to 350 new residents to our city, 100 construction jobs, and six permanent jobs. That will increase the property taxes generated by that property by almost \$1 million a year, about two-thirds of which will go to support our schools.

And we continue to be a work in progress. There are several new projects going through the City's rigorous review process, including the City-owned parking lot at 1714 Chicago Avenue, aka the library parking lot.

Northlight Theatre wants to come back to Evanston, and I'd like to bring them back. Some of you may remember that Northlight got its start in 1974 as Evanston Theater Company. But for the last 20 years, they've been performing great shows in Skokie, attracting audiences of more than 50,000 people each season. Wouldn't it be nice if those 50,000 people were dining in Evanston before and after productions, adding vibrancy to our downtown and spending money here? We want Northlight back in Evanston, but we have a long way to go. Our community will have to accept change to bring them back, and sacrifices will have to be made by all of us.

2018 is a big year for Evanston. And not just because our beloved former Mayor Lorraine H. Morton turns 100 in December. But it's also a big year because it's filled with opportunities and potential.

First Bank & Trust saw opportunity and potential in our community 23 years ago when it was started by Evanston residents, including another great Evanston Mayor, Jay Lytle. Today, Evanston First Bank & Trust has more than \$1 billion in assets, and is set to be acquired for \$169 million. That's real value that was created right here in our community, by our community.

We, too, can create value in our city, but we have to keep our eyes open for opportunities. We have to be open to change. We have to be willing to fight for the City we want.

And if we want more visitors spending money in our community, we need to build new amenities and attract cultural institutions.

If our City's budget is challenged, we have to be open to expanding our tax base through new development.

If we have a resource like fresh, clean water, we need to find more communities who want to buy it.

If our students aren't meeting their potential, we need to provide opportunities to elevate them.

If facilities aren't meeting our needs, we need to re-envision, collaborate, and invest in new ones.

If we want social justice and environmental progress, we must all stand up and take action.

If we want entrepreneurs to start and grow businesses in Evanston, we must make it easy to do business here.

Redfin was right: Evanston does "have it all." But if we want our city to remain the attractive, vibrant, and special place that it is – if we want to live up to our potential – we can't stop looking for opportunities. It doesn't matter if you're a 6th grader like Sophia working on a science project, a 70-year-old selling a bank, or a City government building a new public space. There are opportunities everywhere. And we need to seize them. If we can do that, the state of our city will remain strong not only in 2018, but for many, many years to come.

Thank you.