

Thank you, thank you, thank you. It is my honor to serve as your mayor, and I am proud to say that every day is a great day to live, work and play in the great city of Lawrence. I am thrilled to be before you again to deliver my second State of the City Address and share our many successes, as well as a few initiatives we will be introducing to continue improving the quality of life for those who call Lawrence home and the businesses that drive our economy.

As I look around this room, I am overwhelmed with joy at the many individuals working tirelessly daily for our residents. I look forward to collaborating with you to identify resources and opportunities to continue our growth and attract initiatives for the community.

Before I begin my comments, I have to take a moment to recognize our 2025 IHSA girls basketball champions, the Lawrence North Lady Wildcats. Ladies, please stand and let's give them a round of applause.

We are all so incredibly proud of you! Now I know it is a school night. You're about a month away from final exams and the end of the semester, so I'm sure your homework is calling you, so we're going to let you all head out now. But again, congratulations to you, the coaching staff, parents, and everyone who helped you bring the championship home to Lawrence Township. Job well done.

When I came to you last year, my first year in office, I committed to you that my administration would be transparent, open, and honest. I also announced a key core value that would serve as the guiding light: the importance of team unity. Just moments ago, we celebrated the achievements of our Lawrence North Girls Basketball team. How exciting that a team from Lawrence Township School District brought home the championship two years in a row. Our teams are shining examples of what can be achieved when we are unified and work together towards the same goal.

As I stand before you as your mayor, there were times when we had to revisit our team lineup, recruit new staff, and restructure our departments. We've done just that, and just like any team coach, I will keep examining our staff. If we need to make changes to improve our city outcomes, I am committed to making those necessary changes. It is not lost on us that changes at the statehouse will impact our city. While the Indiana General Assembly is still in session, we are monitoring. Depending on actions taken, we know there will be implications for our families and businesses. My administration is following closely, and depending on the outcomes, we'll identify the various agencies and community partners we need to engage.

I also want to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge the members of the Lawrence Common Council.

While I serve as our city's executive branch, the Lawrence Common Council is the legislative arm of our city government. Approving our annual budget and ordinances scratches the surface of their work. 2024 was a year of transition and transformation for us all. Our goal has been to work together to identify pathways for serving the residents of Lawrence. I am grateful for our time last year redefining our relationship, re-engaging, and coming together for a common cause.

I look forward to working with you during the remainder of the year, identifying new and innovative ways to improve our governance and city operations for our residents and businesses, and attracting new opportunities for Lawrence.

In 2024, I announced plans to secure a chief medical officer for Lawrence. I am pleased to share with you tonight that we have brought on Dr. John Kunzer of Community Health Network to serve in this role voluntarily. Dr. Kunzer came to Community in 2015 as Senior Vice President and Physician Executive for the network's East region.

Before joining Community Health Network, Dr. Kunzer was the CEO of Eskenazi Medical Group and the Chief Medical Officer of Eskenazi Health Center. He is a leader in transforming healthcare, achieving exceptional outpatient satisfaction and quality scores, and obtaining NCQA Patient-Centered Medical Home Level 3 (the highest level) for multiple practices. He also leads the only Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Accountable Health Communities-funded model in Indiana. We are very fortunate to have him join our administration - Thank you, Dr. Kunzer.

I am also proud to announce that effective today under Dr. Kunzer's leadership, we are launching a city-wide initiative called "Live Longer in Lawrence" a comprehensive health and wellness effort designed to expand opportunities for residents to achieve their full potential for a healthy life at every stage and to improve health outcomes across the city. Our vision for "Live Longer in Lawrence" is driven by evidence-based interventions and policies that address the economic, physical, and social environments where our families live, learn, work, and play. The City aims to create a healthier, more resilient Lawrence by fostering partnerships and implementing community-focused strategies.

Live Longer in Lawrence will have three major components. The first is Health in All Policies. This approach integrates health considerations into decision-making across all sectors. We must recognize how policies in areas such as transportation, education, economic development, and urban planning affect public health. By collaborating with diverse stakeholders, the City aims to promote health, equity, and sustainability while supporting broader community goals.

The second is Eliminating Health Inequities. Despite efforts over the last 20 years, health disparities persist, particularly among minority populations. National data shows that Hispanic/Latino and Black adults face higher rates of chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, and are more likely to be uninsured. Given

Lawrence's diverse population and the significant prevalence of chronic diseases, it is essential to identify and address local health disparities. By expanding access to care and promoting targeted interventions, the City can help bridge the health equity gap.

The third involves creating a Collective Impact to Empower Communities. The Collective Impact model unites community members, organizations, and institutions to Align efforts and drive system-level change. Lawrence is home to many community-based organizations, businesses, schools, and faith-based groups already working toward better health outcomes. By fostering citywide collaboration, Live Longer in Lawrence can amplify these efforts and drive meaningful change. Dr. Kunzer and our team in the Mayor's Office have been hard at work, and I am pleased to announce that under my leadership, we will host our first-ever city-wide health fair on April 27 at Lawrence Community Park.

In partnership with Community Health Network, the "Live Longer in Lawrence" Health & Wellness Fair will allow families to connect with local organizations, businesses, and healthcare providers and receive valuable resources to support their well-being. This event is free and open to the public and individuals of all ages. The YMCA will offer classes for older adults, a baseball clinic, skateboard demonstrations, kickball games and a youth flag football clinic. This health fair will also provide free health screenings, resources, and tips for a healthy and active lifestyle.

To "Live Longer in Lawrence," we must prioritize the mental and physical well-being of our residents. We must also ensure that our city operates efficiently and prioritizes the needs of its residents in everything we do.

Living Longer in Lawrence will require strong fiscal health. I am pleased to share that our city's fiscal health is strong.

In 2024, we passed a balanced budget of \$28 million for the 2025 fiscal year. We have and will continue to focus on sound fiscal policies to ensure our continued growth, stability, and responsible spending for Lawrence's residents.

Last year, in conjunction with the Lawrence Common Council, we issued a \$7 million General Obligation Bond to consolidate public safety equipment leases, relieving pressure on the City's General Fund. In conjunction with the G-O-Bond, we brought in additional revenues estimated at upwards of \$900K by maximizing the Cumulative Capital Improvement Fund, and we ended 9% under budget, with \$6.2 million in unspent funds. I am also pleased to share that the City of Lawrence has maintained a 20% operating reserve for the seventh consecutive year. These accomplishments demonstrate responsible financial oversight and our dedication to long-term economic sustainability, which is necessary for our families to "Live Longer in Lawrence".

Public safety is also a priority. Last year, through comprehensive and rigorous negotiations with the Lawrence Police and Fire Unions, we achieved a Collective Bargaining Agreement that secured a 5% pay increase for our merit police officers and firefighters, along with

broader incentives to educate, attract, and retain public safety personnel while not increasing the financial burden on taxpayers. We value our public safety officials, and we must attract and retain the best of the best who will serve our community.

While we pride ourselves on having a safe community with limited violent crimes, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge our commitment to identifying opportunities and pathways for improved communication and transparency with law enforcement. During 2025 we will implement the Lawrence Community-Led "Critical Response Team." This initiative aims to increase transparency during critical incidents and will include representation from the eight city neighborhoods established this year. The Critical Response Team will be activated this summer and collaborate with the Lawrence Police Department. Also, considering our goal to "Live Longer in Lawrence," we completed the Lawrence Police Department's first-ever 5-year Strategic Plan, which focuses on making Lawrence the safest place to live, work, visit, and raise a family.

As the City of Lawrence grows, we must expand our police force. Over the past year, we added 25 merit and reserve officers, and we are just three merit officers away from our goal of increasing the department staffing to 68 authorized officers. Achieving this goal will mean we have the full authorized number necessary to operate efficiently, allowing for more personal time off and breaks, and minimizing officer burnout. We have also utilized our remaining American Rescue Plan Act funding to purchase new police vehicles and equipment.

Indiana's EMS personnel are the bridge connecting public safety, public health, and health care. Our Lawrence fire and EMS teams are a critical component of that bridge. Our first responders answer thousands of calls yearly and remain on our city's front line of medical treatment and care. In recent years, in Indiana and around the country, Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) has been a growing, innovative approach to how the EMS system works as part of the overall public health system. MIH is a patient-centered model of care delivered in a patient's home or a mobile environment. Community paramedics can visit patients at home and assist with health screenings, vaccinations, treatments and follow-ups. MIH can also include social work, substance abuse resources, mental health, chronic disease management, and more.

In 2024, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security approved our Lawrence Fire Department's development of a community-centered Mobile Integrated Health System. With this approval, the Lawrence Fire Department can seek grants to provide direct and follow-up services to the public. These services include mental health resources, prescription drug resources, and more. Our Fire Department personnel can intervene and provide direct and follow-up services to help our residents "Live Longer in Lawrence".

Our Lawrence Fire Department remains focused on the community. Thanks to ARPA funding in 2024, the Lawrence Fire Department implemented Handtevy, the Pediatric medication dosing program. This software enhances EMS personnel's ability to quickly and accurately calculate medication dosages for both pediatric and adult patients in any

emergency run. Additionally, through a partnership with Ivy Tech Community College on Fort Ben, we have provided our LFD personnel with opportunities for continued education and the pre-acceptance of new EMT/Medic students. Also, in 2024, the Lawrence Fire Department offered free CPR classes and distributed free smoke detectors to ensure that our fire personnel and community members could handle a cardiac emergency. All of these programs will continue in 2025.

But while our Lawrence Fire Department prioritizes the community's needs, we must also ensure that we do the same for them. This is why in 2024, we launched free cancer screening scans and will continue to do so in 2025. Also, the National Institutes of Health states that the leading cause of line-of-duty mortality is sudden cardiac death, accounting for 45% of all firefighter duty-related fatalities. Chief Wallace is proud to announce that we have partnered with Community Health Network to provide cardiovascular preventative scans at no cost to our firefighters. A brief CT scan measures the amount of calcium in the lining of the coronary arteries. Early detection can mean predicting the potential for a cardiovascular event, such as a heart attack, earlier. We must take care of our first responders who, each day, put themselves in harm's way to protect us all.

Now, to “Live Longer in Lawrence,” we also have to ensure we can move around safely on our streets and sidewalks. But before we talk about what we’ve been able to accomplish and what we have planned, let’s discuss potholes, particularly who is responsible for what. You should know that INDOT, the Indiana Department of Transportation, is responsible for state highways, such as Pendleton Pike (U.S. 36). The City of Lawrence maintains all local roads within its city limits, including snow plowing and pothole repairs. The City of Indianapolis' Department of Public Works (DPW) handles the construction and reconstruction of primary and secondary arterial streets, as well as certain collector streets listed in their thoroughfare plan. If there is a pothole near a train track, then it should be reported directly to CSX. We encourage residents to visit the City of Lawrence website to report potholes or any other street issues they may encounter.

There are many road and infrastructure improvements planned for the upcoming year. Last year, we announced road improvements for Geist Valley Estates. I'm pleased to tell you that construction will begin this summer. These improvements will include milling and filling, total repaving, and road improvements that meet ADA standards for intersections. Additional projects include work on 52nd Street stretching from German Church Road to the roundabout. Families living in portions of the Winding Ridge community will receive upgrades, and Carroll Road, from Pendleton Pike to 79th Street, will also receive significant attention. A \$3 million Community Crossings Matching Grant will fund these road improvement projects. We will provide \$1.5 million in funding, which the Indiana Department of Transportation will match us dollar for dollar.

But this is not all. In 2025, we will complete strip patching from the 79th Street bridge to Fall Creek Road and conduct road repairs from German Church to Pendleton Pike on 59th

Street. We have also targeted significant funds for investing in road repairs and improvements throughout our city.

In the Fall of 2025, DPW will oversee the construction of the 75th Street and Oaklandon Roundabout. With \$2.2 million in funding awarded through the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Improvement Program and an additional \$800,000 provided by the City, this project will increase traffic safety, reduce congestion, and improve traffic flow in the Oaklandon and Indian Lake neighborhoods.

Also, keeping in mind our commitment to addressing health equity for all, in 2024, we installed new ADA-compliant sidewalks along the Fort Ben neighborhood, and we spent nearly \$100,000 on sidewalk improvements throughout residential neighborhoods in Lawrence. I'm pleased to share that sidewalk improvement projects will continue throughout 2025.

Of course, you can't live in Indiana without talking about snow. With great determination and efficiency, our Lawrence Street Department handled the largest snow accumulation we have experienced in seven years, clearing tons of snow from residential streets and major thoroughfares in record time. In coordination with Lawrence Utilities, their efforts cleared nearly 247 lane miles of 10 inches of snow and ice this past winter. I want to publicly thank them for their contributions, which ensured that our families and public safety personnel could move around safely in the community and get to the grocery store, school, doctors' appointments, and any other place they needed to go. Your efforts are helping those who work and do business in our community to Live Longer in Lawrence. Nothing tests the resilience of our city infrastructure, employees, and residents like an evolving situation and our ability to respond. The entire City of Lawrence was put to the test just weeks ago when we experienced a water main break and a subsequent boil water advisory. As the situation unfolded, we realized that our residents and businesses needed information faster than we could share. Our city deserves communications that go above and beyond what the Indiana Department of Environmental Management requires this, which is why my administration plans to invest in new communication technology to ensure the timely distribution of information. Lawrence Utilities is researching the best and most convenient ways to achieve this, and I look forward to sharing the innovative improvements we have identified.

You should be pleased to know that Lawrence Utilities is replacing outdated infrastructure. The infrastructure was old, as a former military base, and some water mains dated back to the 1970s. Lawrence Utilities completed Phase II of the Contract B Water System Improvements to enhance our critical water infrastructure, adding over 14,000 feet of new water mains and hydrants, as well as necessary repairs along Franklin Road, Richardt, and 46th Street between Franklin and Shadeland. They have also developed a process for constant updates, as this is a long-term project that will span several years.

Living Longer in Lawrence will also require the Lawrence Utilities team to intensify efforts to eliminate Inflow and Infiltration in the sanitary sewer system, reducing unnecessary sewage treatment costs. As we consider our growth as a city, we must identify solutions to address current and future utility needs for proper sewage disposal. This process will significantly impact the city's capabilities for future growth and our ability to attract new families to Lawrence, while also boosting our economic development opportunities. Speaking of economic development, I'm pleased to share that we've issued 81 new housing permits for brand-new single-family homes over the past year. As a community, we are aware of the need for more housing of all types. I intend to build upon recent and ongoing discussions with the Common Council to take a more progressive approach to this timely issue and to make Lawrence a 'Housing Ready City'. To that end I will be naming a Housing Ready Task Force in the coming weeks to explore some of these new approaches for our City." Please stay tuned for more information about this task force and its mission and vision for our city.

Also, in our efforts to grow our city and position Fort Ben as the city center of Lawrence, groundbreaking has begun on a significant new development at Fort Ben by our partners with Keystone Group. This latest development, known as The Benjamin, will include over 200 luxury apartment units and 24,000 square feet of retail space, including evening dining spaces for families to enjoy dinner on the fort. We have also secured agreements with Veridus Group to boost our economic growth. The Veridus Group, one of Indiana's premier architectural design firms, is moving to the historic Fort Ben area and will extensively renovate 5649 Lee Road. By investing over \$1 million and expanding from 9 to 30 employees within the building, the Veridus Group demonstrates its deep commitment to preserving Fort Ben's heritage and driving the district's modern growth.

And there's more news. Family-owned and operated, Foamcraft Incorporated has grown substantially since its inception in 1952. In 2001, Foamcraft moved its headquarters to Lawrence and has established itself as a reliable business-to-business manufacturer and a standard in the foam fabricating industry through its first two generations of leadership. Now, as the third generation takes the reins, it has branched out again. Yesterday, we broke ground on "The Corner" at Fort Ben, located at 56th & Lee Rd, which will include a high-end dining option. The development targets additional local tenants and owners, including an ice cream shop, a coffee shop, a bakery, and more.

There is so much to see and do in Lawrence, and it's essential that when people exit off of I-465 and travel down Pendleton Pike, the roads and businesses along The Pike reflect who we are as a city. That is why we are collaborating with the City of Indianapolis to finalize a zoning overlay and plans to improve neglected properties along Pendleton Pike. While this is a work in progress, our goal is to have greater autonomy in our zoning that will attract the types of businesses that reflect who we are as a community. Our success will stem from an interlocal agreement between the City of Lawrence and the Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development. We are committed to creating a welcoming corridor that contributes to our economy and offers something for all who call Lawrence home.

Quality of Life has and will continue to be a top priority for my administration. We are currently developing the Lawrence Community Park Master Plan, which includes plans to revitalize Lawrence Community Park, our city's signature park.

One key feature of my administration is making Lawrence a destination for recreational sports and outdoor entertainment. One element of the Community Park's Master Plan is to build an outdoor amphitheater for festivals, concerts, and other events. I want it to serve as a gathering space where families and friends can enjoy the amenities of a revitalized Lawrence Community Park.

Living longer in Lawrence will also require us to reinvest in our Parks Department. We have created a 3-year strategic plan that includes staff development, technology improvements, revenue-generating opportunities, and more. All 12 of our Parks offer unique amenities for our residents, and we aim to be a recreational destination for sports leagues and partnerships. Our trails are also a key component of quality of life. Thanks to Indiana's Next Level Trails Funding, we completed construction and opened the Lee Road Trail in October 2024. This new trail marks the first step in extending the Fall Creek Trail up to 79th Street, providing safe and accessible mobility options for our residents. You should also be pleased to know that the Fall Creek Trail Expansion design plan is underway. The Fall Creek Greenway is expanding with a nearly 2-mile extension from Lee Road at 63rd Street to the Upper Loop Trail at Geist Crossing. This new paved multi-use path, which features a boardwalk section, will enhance connectivity to the existing 14-mile trail that stretches from downtown Indianapolis to Fort Harrison State Park. This project, funded by a \$5 million grant from Indiana's Next Level Trails program and \$1.75 million in matching funds from the Central Indiana Community Foundation through Lilly Endowment, strengthens trail connections between Lawrence, Geist, and downtown Indianapolis, improving mobility, recreation, and community access.

Another quality-of-life initiative we're proud of is Visit Lawrence 2.0. In January, the city launched the redesigned [VisitLawrenceIndiana.com](https://www.visitlawrenceindiana.com)—the one-stop destination for everything Lawrence! Whether you're a resident or just stopping by, there's something for everyone.

We also launched an initiative to celebrate and recognize Lawrence's Neighborhoods. Every neighborhood in Lawrence has a unique identity and history, and our families and businesses are drawn to those communities within our larger community. In December 2024, the Lawrence Common Council officially recognized our eight unique neighborhoods, fostering community pride and supporting local development. These neighborhoods include Oaklandon, Fort Ben, Indian Lake, Lanesville, The Pike, Sunnyside, Geist's Edge, and The Ridge.

The Lawrence Neighborhood Hub offers guidance and opportunities for enhanced neighborhood connectivity, civic engagement, and support for local organizations. It also serves as a registry for neighborhood and homeowners associations.



With roots in the legacy of Fort Benjamin Harrison, the city has evolved into a vibrant, diverse community of 50,000 residents. This year, I encourage you to take advantage of the numerous events that will take place throughout the city. Come out and join our Lawrence Forever Young Club, hosted by our Parks department, which promotes health and wellness for seniors. We will also host the 10th Annual Fort Ben Farmers Market, featuring fresh, locally grown produce, handmade goods, and artisan products brought to the Lawrence community. Over the years, the Fort Ben Farmers Market has grown as a family tradition on Thursday evenings from June to October. Our Lawrence BBQ & Blues event is returning and will feature local BBQ vendors and blues music. We've also partnered with Heartland Film for the Starry Nights at the Fort Film Series, offering free outdoor screenings of classic and family-friendly films at the Cultural Campus, and we will continue to support and promote arts and culture within our community.

So, as you can see, a lot is happening in Lawrence, and I am committed to working with everyone in this room and our entire community to create opportunities for everyone who calls Lawrence home. This is our city, and I invite you to join me in this journey to make a better Lawrence for today and tomorrow. The future depends on the decisions we make today. Let's join together. Let's work together and leave no stone unturned to ensure that everyone has access to resources, opportunities, and partnerships that will help them to Live Longer in Lawrence.

When I ran for office, I told you all that it's time, and the time is now. As I close out this State of the City Address and we reflect on all my administration has accomplished and all that lies ahead, let me remind you that here in Lawrence, IT'S TIME AND THE TIME IS NOW!