

**For Immediate Release**

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**WHITFIELD DELIVERS INAUGURAL STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

*Newest mayor of Lawrence highlights importance of community relationships with government*

**Lawrence** – In her first State of the City address, City of Lawrence Mayor Deb Whitfield spoke generously of her predecessors, many of whom are Republicans. “I didn’t run for mayor of Lawrence to save a city I thought was failing,” Whitfield said. “No, I ran to make our great city even greater, to build on the hard work and well-deserved successes of previous administrations.”

Whitfield also spoke pointedly about her choice to retain many long-serving city employees in her administration, saying the institutional knowledge they possess balances the fresh ideas of more recent recruits to the Lawrence government. Nevertheless, the mayor made clear her intention to break with certain customs established by previous mayors – and the first to go was the tradition of delivering the State of the City address at a private, ticketed event.

“While I am mayor,” Whitfield said, “these discussions about the state of your city will never take place behind closed doors, will never require a fee to get in, will never ask more of you than what you’ve already proved by being here – that you care deeply about this Lawrence community.”

Whitfield announced several new appointments and initiatives her administration has launched or will undertake soon, including:

- The formation of a City of Lawrence Community Advisory Council, comprised of local faith and education leaders, grassroots and neighborhood organizers, and representatives from local businesses and nonprofit organizations. Whitfield said the Community Advisory Council “will bring your voices directly into the Office of the Mayor,” and will speak authentically to the priorities and needs of Lawrence residents.
- The appointment of Matt Hall, a U.S. Army Reserve Battalion Commander, combat veteran, and longtime veterans’ advocate as the city’s first-ever military veterans’ liaison.
- A new partnership between the City of Lawrence, the Lawrence Fire Department, Community Health Network, and the Community Health Network Foundation to provide state-of-the-art cancer screening for all Lawrence firefighters at no cost to taxpayers.
- A soon-to-be-hired crime analyst, a first for the City of Lawrence, to support the work of the Lawrence Police Department.
- A “Mayor’s Small Business Tour” later this year to highlight the work of local

entrepreneurs.

- A \$1M Community Crossings Matching Grant from the Indiana Department of Transportation to repair and resurface several of the most deteriorated local roads and repairs to several streets in historic Lawrence.

Whitfield will also move ahead with several projects that have roots in previous administrations, including:

- A \$5M grant from Indiana's Next Level Trails program, awarded in December of 2023, to allow the City of Lawrence to construct a nearly 2-mile extension of the Fall Creek Greenway from Lee Road at 63rd Street to the Upper Look Trail at Geist Crossing in partnership with Indy's Urban Wilderness and Indy Parks.
- Completion of repairs in historic Lawrence.

Whitfield took some time early in her address to recognize the members of Lawrence Central's 2023-24 IHSAA Class 4A Girls Basketball State Championship team and presented a mayoral commendation to MSDLT Superintendent Dr. Shawn Smith, Lawrence Central Principal Franklyn Bush and Lady Bears Head Coach Jannon Lampley. Coach Lampley and the Lady Bears had a record-breaking season that culminated in the first state championship for Lawrence Central's girls basketball program.

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