

**Jeffersonville State of City Address**

**Tuesday, March 7, 2023**

**Rotary Club**



**“Building the Foundation for Our Next Generation”**

**Mayor Mike Moore**

Good afternoon.

As always, thank you for inviting me to be here again.

I'm grateful to The Rotary Club for giving me a chance each year to talk about the exciting things happening in our great city and what's ahead.

I'd like to recognize members of the City Council who are here today.

A lot has happened since I was last before you. Jeffersonville has continued to flourish.

Some numbers from last year speak for themselves. More than \$80 million of new investment was made in Jeffersonville generating \$66 million in new payroll.

All of that was done post-pandemic - demonstrating the strength of our local economy. It also shows the resolve and resiliency of our community. We didn't just weather the COVID storm. We came into 2023 with the momentum and energy that will allow Jeffersonville to build upon its success.

With that said, I'm proud to declare that the **State of Our City is strong**. And it's getting stronger every day!

Over the last year, there's one thing we discovered. As Jeffersonville evolves, it continues to draw attention from people in places far beyond the Hoosier State.

Last fall, Money magazine named Jeff one of the Top 50 Best Places to Live. Now, that probably doesn't come as a surprise to anyone in this room - or any of the tens of thousands of folks who call Jeffersonville home. But it sure does feel good when the rest of the world stands up and notices everything we have to offer and have worked so hard to accomplish.

The magazine cited our successful revitalization of downtown and the riverfront as major reasons people want to put down roots in Jeff. Combined with a short commute to Louisville, lower housing costs and high employment opportunities, the magazine called Jeff "a magnet for adults eager to move away from larger cities."

Indeed, Jeffersonville's housing market continues to be strong. More than 300 new single-family homes were approved by the city's Planning and Zoning Department in 2022 and construction on two significant multi-family projects - Lakeside Gardens and phase one of the Jeff on 10<sup>th</sup>, wrapped up last year as well. Additionally, 2022 brought the opening of two senior living communities - Vivera and Bridgepoint Gardens.

Businesses also recognize our good fortune and continue to stake their claim in Jeff.

The city's Planning department approved 56 certificates for new businesses in 2022 alone. Among those were Academy Sports, Tazikis Mediterranean Café and Drake's along

Veterans Parkway. And still experiencing a boom of its own, 10<sup>th</sup> Street welcomed multiple new businesses, including 7 Brew Coffee and Crumbl Cookie, as well as emergency care facilities from both Baptist Health and Norton Health.

Development at River Ridge continues to be strong too, with nearly 2 million square feet of projects being approved by the city's planning department in 2022.

And that's just a glimpse of the commercial growth all across Jeffersonville in the last year.

Based upon inquiries to our Planning & Zoning Department from potential applicants, we expect 2023 to be another strong year as well.

That's why we remain committed to ensuring we are focusing on responsible, impactful growth throughout the city. To that effect, our planning and zoning department spent much of the last year collecting data, talking with residents and civic leaders and mapping development trends that will help determine a course of action for the city's growth over the next 10-20 years.

Led by Chad Reischl, the department is in the final days of creating its first Comprehensive Plan since 2015. The final touches are still being put on the plan before it's presented to the City Council, but I am especially excited by the input our team received from residents who participated in the Building Jeff project.

The 300-plus people who offered input identified our small-town community feel, the Big Four Bridge, our parks and recreation opportunities, downtown Jeff and the Arts & Cultural District as Jeffersonville's greatest strengths. That input reinforces to me that the City is on the right track.

Our administration has been committed to developing and nurturing every one of those strengths for the last 10 years. It's encouraging that the folks who call Jeffersonville home recognize our efforts and appreciate those amenities as much as we do.

Another thing our Building Jeff feedback told us is that residents prioritize walkability and bike-ability citywide. We couldn't agree more. That's why we've been focused on adding sidewalks.

That commitment to walkability and connected living was recognized by the State last fall when it announced Jeffersonville will receive a \$2.3 million Next Level Trails grant that will allow the city to complete our portion of the Ohio River Greenway near Upland Brewing. The extension will provide a complete connection to Clarksville from Riverside Drive and is expected to be complete by the end of the year.

And speaking of walkability, it's time for us to make some long overdue improvements to Utica Pike. That's why today I'm announcing the "Hike the Pike" initiative where we will construct an 8 foot wide, 6000 foot long concrete multi-use path along Utica Pike from Allison Lane to Six Mile Lane at Island View Subdivision. Not only will "Hike the Pike" make the corridor more walkable, it will make it safer for pedestrians along Utica Pike.

Creating the best quality of life for residents is a driving force behind our daily work in the City. That purpose is apparent in most of the projects we undertake. From infrastructure, to

recreation, public amenities and beyond, we are committed to giving residents the best life and ensuring Jeff's place in the future.

As we head into 2023, we will again show our administration's commitment to improving the quality of life for Jeffersonville's residents.

The first is in response to what has quickly become the fastest-growing sport in the United States. There are well over 4.8 million people who play Pickleball. So it's no surprise that the few existing courts on the unused tennis courts at the Envision Center can't meet the demand of the local Pickleball players.

That's why this year we will construct 16 new lighted Pickleball courts at Lotte Oglesby Park off Ewing Lane. Along with the courts, you'll see a covered picnic pavilion with restrooms. The state of the art facility, surrounded by a berm, will have walking trails for the nearby neighbors to use as well.

When I came into office in 2012, the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and Spring was vacant land. Frankly, the gateway into our city was searching for its identity. Fast forward and today the area has been revitalized with new businesses including the city's first freestanding Starbucks.

Along the way, we've also watched our arts and cultural district come into existence. In the area that we now call NoCo, you'll find artists and businesses like Maker 13. It's also the site of The Depot – a fun and unique art and entertainment venue made out of shipping containers along Michigan Avenue.

It's safe to say that both areas have been transformed. Now it's time to connect NoCo and the Gateway, with a new 2-acre open lawn space between 9<sup>th</sup> Streets, Indiana Avenue and Ohio Avenue called Falls Landing.

As a new gathering place between two popular areas, Falls Landing will consist of multi-colored pavilions, a large center pathway to host art fairs and vendor tents, areas for sculpture gardens, pedestrian pathways and decorative lighting.

We hit an important milestone in October when we completed our \$20 million Jeff Digs project – the largest infrastructure project in city history. With the completion of Jeff Digs, the City completed its federal obligation to the United States Environmental Protection Agency to control combined sewer overflows into the Ohio River. Under the guidance of Utility Director Len Ashack, I'm proud to report Jeff Digs was completed ahead of schedule, for millions of dollars less than it was originally estimated to cost and Jeffersonville is now putting its best foot forward in an effort to be a better steward of the environment.

Work on another wastewater project aimed at positioning the City for future development started in November. I told you when I was here last year that we were close to securing funding for a \$45 million expansion of the city's North Wastewater Treatment Facility. Well, thanks to a \$12 million contribution from River Ridge, combined with more than \$17 million in state and federal dollars, the city will be able to double capacity at the plant near River Ridge by the summer of 2025. And we're doing it without raising sewer rates.

And we aren't done with improvements to our infrastructure. We are on schedule to begin construction next year on the Charlestown Pike Enhancement Project. It's a nearly \$19 million investment that will help cope with the growth happening in our east end.

As you recall this will be done in two segments. The first covers Holman Lane to Utica-Sellersburg Road and will widen the road to include a turning lane. The second segment will be widened from Utica-Sellersburg Road to Salem-Noble Road with acceleration and deceleration lanes near some of the entrances into the busier subdivisions. Both segments will have sidewalks on either side along with curbs and gutters added to the road.

Our city is carried by so many people whose faces most people never see. They aren't on the news or on a stage accepting awards. But every accomplishment or advancement we make as a city and every service provided that residents rely on – all of that is only possible because of those people. The path we are forging as a City is possible because of their commitment to do what's best for Jeffersonville. I am grateful for all of the City's employees who go the extra mile.

I'd like to take just a minute to recognize one of those employees – our animal shelter director Sarah Green. Working in animal welfare isn't just a 9 to 5 job. It requires passion, compassion and determination. Sarah has all those things. She also has drive – which is what led her last year to earn her Master's of Science Degree in Shelter Medicine from the University of Florida. The animals in our community and the people who care for them are reaping the benefits of Sarah's dedication. We are lucky to have had her on our team for the last 10 years.

Now also seems like a good time to introduce Heather Rapp, the city's new Public Arts Administrator, since her passion for creativity and community art is what led her to the City. Heather is a Jeff High grad who found herself hitting the reset button on her career following the pandemic. Last November, she decided to seize the opportunity to help build on the creative culture we've been striving to shape in Jeffersonville. We're excited to have her on our team.

Thanks to the help of a great working relationship with the City Council, the city's finances are solid. That relationship along with the hard work of Controller Heather Metcalf and her department, Jeffersonville has avoided the fiscal woes many other municipalities experienced in the wake of the pandemic.

With that said, I'm proud to report that we ended last year with \$11.8 million in cash on hand with another \$4.4 million in our rainy day fund. It's these cash reserves that's helped us maneuver the last couple years without ever once compromising city services that the people of Jeffersonville deserve and expect.

I am proud to be able to tell you Jeffersonville is one of the safest cities in the country, thanks to the daily efforts of our men and women at the Jeffersonville Police Department.

Our police department employs 21<sup>st</sup>-century policing models and implements intelligence-led policing strategies to protect our city from crime. The professionalism and diligence of the department is paying off, as Jeffersonville continues to enjoy low property and violent crime rates.

I appreciate the foresight of Chief Kenny Kavanaugh and Assistant Chief Scott McVoy. They are always looking for the best, most efficient approach to addressing issues facing not only the community, but police officers as well. I recognize the daily challenges police officers face and remain committed to ensuring the men and women who serve our city receive the funding, training, benefits and support they deserve.

Work is currently underway on a \$750,000 project that will create a new operations center inside the current JPD headquarters. Once finished later this summer, the space will allow the police department to have a secondary dispatch center in the event of an emergency and have planning space for large-scale operations and collaboration with other public safety entities.

Keeping up with common issues plaguing communities nationwide, our police department is moving progressively toward Community Risk Reduction. Through partnerships with local providers like LifeSpring, JPD is able to engage in programs like Project Care which provides resources and help for people affected by substance abuse disorders. This is a difficult and all too prevalent problem in communities today. But I am encouraged by the success our police department has had through this collaboration so far; connecting nearly 275 people to support resources, with nearly 76% of those people enrolling in the recovery program.

Last year we began to receive some of the first monies from our lawsuits against the pharmaceutical companies for the city's costs of responding to the Opioid epidemic. Many of these dollars will also go to help fund programs intended to eradicate substance abuse in our community. Our first responders will benefit from some of this money as well, since they're on the front line battling the symptoms of the epidemic.

As Mayor, I take great pride that we have one of the premier fire departments in the region led by Chief Shawn Grant and Deputy Chiefs Jason Sharp and Mike McCutcheon. They have the department in a constant state of readiness.

Part of that readiness is making sure our fire personnel have the most up-to-date training. A great example of this happened last year when all new fire marshals were certified as police officers through the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy. This enhances public safety and allows fire investigators to work cases from the beginning of an incident, until its conclusion.

We will soon break ground on a new Safety Town at Fire Headquarters on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. It's just the next chapter in the city's five decade old partnership with The Pilot Club, where we offer kids a week long program to learn about safety tips related to electric, water, fire and bicycle riding.

As the father of two daughters, I'm reminded that tomorrow is International Women's Day. So I thought it would be appropriate to recognize two of the department's first female firefighters as they get ready to retire from service. Captain Pam Blanchard and Lieutenant Marvena Allen will hang-up their helmets and move on with the next phases of their lives. I want to thank Pam and Marvena for their years of service to our community, but to especially commend them each for opening the door for others to follow.

Last year I discussed my vision for the future of the former Jeff Boat site. At that time, I proposed the City forging a partnership with the owner of the abandoned shipyard to hire a firm to prepare a master plan for the development of the nearly 80 acres along our riverfront.

I am proud to report work has started on that master plan. Keep in mind that this is still private property. But working with the property owner to develop a master plan, is the first step in ultimately transforming our riverfront like never before.

I've said many times that the old Jeff Boat site is a blank slate. And we want to get it right. The development won't happen overnight.

It's no surprise that most everyone has an opinion on what it should look like. It's one of the most talked about projects in the region, if not the country. We've already had one public meeting to hear from residents and there will be more. But at the end of day, the future of the property is ultimately in the hands of the owner.

But I'm encouraged by the openness and willingness of the owner to listen. I'm optimistic that with the help of a public-private partnership, we will transform the old Jeff Boat property into something very special. Something that will last for generations to come while fueling even more growth and development for our city.

And those next generations are what matter the most as we think about Jeffersonville's future. We all want our children and grandchildren to have a better future than ours.

The other day I went back to my childhood home in Oak Park. A lot has changed over the years. But as I walked down Longview Drive, I was reminded of the great memories of my childhood. I also asked myself, what will Jeffersonville look like for the next generation?

I think of my own children when I look to the future as your mayor. That's why I wake up each day committed to making Jeffersonville better for them.

Last year I experienced one my proudest moments as a father when I watched my son, Gerrin, join the armed forces and graduate from the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School. It was emotional to watch my little boy - suddenly now a grown man right before my eyes - make his first salute to me in honor of his grandfather who also served in the Army.

When our kids go out and do great things in the world, it's a reflection on all of us: Parents, teachers, coaches and leaders. I'm certain that an investment in our kids is the best investment we can make for our city.

And that investment is paying off. Just look around and see what has happened, not just in the last year, but in the last dozen years. Our work and vision is transforming Jeffersonville into a city that others admire and want to emulate. One where families want to live and raise their kids. One where businesses want to invest. And one where people want to call home.

As I stated earlier, we started this year with tremendous momentum and energy. That's what excites me the most as your mayor. I'm excited because we have built a foundation

that will foster progress and prosperity for years to come. Let us now harness that momentum and energy to take Jeffersonville even further for the next generation.

Thank you!