

**Jeffersonville State of City Address
Tuesday, February 16, 2021
Rotary Club**



**"Nothing Can Hold Us Back"
Mayor Mike Moore**

Good afternoon.

I want to extend my thanks to the Rotary Club for having me as its guest again this year — albeit under not-so-typical circumstances.

It's strange to look at you inside of a small box on a computer screen, instead of seeing your faces in person, but I am honored to have the opportunity to share the state of our city with you. Good news should always be shared.

But before I move on, let me go back.

On January 27, 2020, the City's safety director asked me what I had heard about a virus from China making its way around the globe, killing hundreds of thousands of people in its path. I'll be honest: I didn't have a clue. He persisted, telling me the City should start coming up with an emergency plan because things might get "pretty bad" for us.

Pretty bad? Little did we know.

Toward the end of February, Coronavirus was the topic of AT LEAST one meeting every day in City Hall. And by the second week of March everyone was working from home, trying to figure out how to mute and unmute their microphones on Zoom calls.

Now, nearly a year later, here we are. Some people still haven't figured out muting and unmuting. But we have faced the blows of a pandemic – and while the threat of COVID still isn't over — we have withstood its challenges at every stage. So much last year was out of our control. But we excelled at everything that was within our control.

And in these early days of 2021, I am pleased to report that the State of our City is standing strong. We are prepared. And we are confident.

It has been said that crisis builds character. But it also reveals character.

Today, I can tell you I have never been more proud of our city – or more proud to be your Mayor. Jeffersonville is a City of great character because it is made of people with incredible will, persistence and compassion and that includes those serving on the City Council.

I've seen it throughout our community so many times over the past year. Neighbors looking after neighbors, residents going out of their way to support local businesses struggling in difficult times, businesses giving to the community despite their own uncertainties.

People city-wide have sacrificed their traditions – like celebrating holidays

with their families. And they have skipped events they had their hearts set on attending. Not because they want to, but because they know that's what is best.

Not only have I seen it in our community, I've seen it in the folks I work with. Our city remains strong because of our dedicated workforce. Our city employees and first responders have reported to work every day throughout the pandemic to serve this community. They have put themselves at risk of catching COVID, taken on extra duties when their peers were forced away from work and they have accommodated a new world of work practices.

I want to especially thank our Safety Director, Brian Smith, for his unwavering dedication and counseling that has helped to keep our employees and the public safe over the last year.

For all the city employees who might be watching this now – or who may see it later – I want to thank you for your resilience and for being dedicated members of the City of Jeff team. I appreciate everything you've done to not only get us through uncertain times, but also to position us for our brightest days ahead. And believe me, there are some very bright days in Jeffersonville's future.

Improving our local economy and our neighborhoods is what drew me to public service. It continues to drive me as your Mayor because good jobs and quality housing lead to thriving communities. We have made astounding progress on both of these fronts over the last nine years and the pandemic didn't slow us down.

Construction sites never slowed during the pandemic and ground continued to be broken on new projects across the City– like the new McDonalds which will open soon at the city's Gateway at 10th and Spring Streets and the Hilton Garden Inn on the city's east end.

Several much-anticipated projects also wrapped up in 2020 bringing new business and investment to all areas of Jeffersonville.

Xscape Theaters opened its doors over the summer, becoming Jeffersonville's first movie theatre in more than 20 years. Fairfield Inn and Planet Fitness also opened up on the east end of the city. Chicken Salad Chick and Five Guys Burgers joined the lineup of new offerings in Jeffersonville Town Center along Veterans Parkway. Starbucks and Jimmy John's celebrated their grand openings at the Gateway and downtown Jeffersonville saw the completion of two of the most transformative projects in recent history with the opening of the Walcott along Maple Street and Union Game Yard and Restaurant on Chestnut Street.

The exciting thing is that all of those places I just mentioned are only a few of the new businesses that decided to call Jeffersonville home in 2020. Even more exciting? There's so much more to come. More than 2.4 million square feet of

new commercial and industrial developments were permitted by our Planning and Zoning Department in 2020, so you can expect to see a lot more businesses opening up this year.

And while this past year's pandemic may have not been too kind to some of existing businesses, we were there to help many of them weather the storm. Twenty-five different businesses were chosen to each receive \$10,000 in grant funding. The money came from the state to help those small businesses survive the struggles of COVID-19.

If there's something we learned from the months of the pandemic is that small businesses are the backbone of our community. Supporting our existing businesses is always a priority, but it's even more important in these difficult and challenging times. It was exciting to have that opportunity to help small businesses remain open and pay their employees.

And speaking of the pandemic, the city was not immune from its impact on our finances. Whether it was more money for technology to allow employees to work remotely, the need to modify city buildings to ensure social distancing or the purchase of personal protective equipment for our first responders, we were incurring expenses that we never imagined.

And even without all of those unexpected expenses, we ended 2020 with \$10.4 million in cash with another \$4.4 million in the rainy day fund. How did we do it? We did it thanks to an on-going healthy rainy-day fund that we started building up nine years ago when we came into office. So, we were in great shape to meet the fiscal demands of COVID-19 without jeopardizing essential city services.

That's not to say we didn't tighten our belt. Along the way, we found savings by cancelling the summer concert series at the River Stage, closing the pool for the summer and postponing some large infrastructure projects.

In short, our fiscal health is strong. It's strong because Jeffersonville continues to grow. The pandemic hasn't slowed our growth one bit. The Jeffersonville Planning and Zoning Department said it actually saw an 8% uptick in new development. I know 2020 was a tough year, but looking towards the future, developers know opportunities are right here.

As Jeffersonville continues to grow and develop, we are also attracting attention from more people who want to live here and raise their families here. To that end, we are working hard to meet the city's long-term housing needs. More than 1,300 new residential units were approved for development in 2020 – including seven new subdivisions, extensions to four existing subdivisions and a 190-unit multi-family development in Jefferson Ridge across from Kroger on 10th Street.

We recognize we have growing responsibilities as we welcome new people to our City. That's why we remain committed to updating and improving City infrastructure. Last year we completed more than \$2 million of paving throughout Jeffersonville neighborhoods and we officially wrapped the rehabilitation of Holmans Lane. This year we are turning our attention to some other long overdue infrastructure projects.

First, is the Utica-Sellersburg Road project. Thanks to a grant from the Indiana Department of Transportation, we will finally be able to repair one of the most problematic stretches of road in the City. The project will consist of reconstructing and widening Utica-Sellersburg Road from Hwy. 62 to the railroad crossing near Keystone Blvd., resurfacing the roadway and adding a turning lane at Hwy 62.

Second, I am excited to be able to tell you we're ready to move forward with our Charlestown Pike Enhancement Project. This will not only widen one of the city's most-thoroughfares, but will also add turning lanes, sidewalks and gutters. We expect to start working on the design phase of the project any day now. But I'll be honest, this is going to be a long-term project so be patient.

Speaking of patience ... That brings me to our biggest project: Jeff Digs. It is the final phase of the largest infrastructure project in the City's history and it is our solution to one of Jeffersonville's longest-standing infrastructure concerns: Our sewer system.

While the project will be contained to the downtown area, it is going to cause disruption at times for residents and commuters over the next couple of years. I know it's going to be a pain. But Jeff Digs will efficiently revitalize and expand our aging sewer infrastructure and is absolutely necessary in order to bring the City into compliance with federal clean water standards.

We might feel some growing pains over the next two years, but Jeff Digs goes a long way in improving our community's quality of life.

And as our city is poised for more growth and development, now is the time to start planning for our future needs. There's plenty of undeveloped land in the east end and especially, at River Ridge. We can't begin to capitalize on this potential unless we can serve the new homes and businesses with sewers.

Now is the time to study the costs and options for expanding our north wastewater treatment facility at River Ridge. If we are going to continue to enjoy the growth of the last ten years, we must ensure we have the infrastructure new businesses and residential developers expect such as sewer capacity. We can't afford to wait until it's too late or we risk missing out on some great opportunities to bring investment and jobs to our community.

I'm happy to report that we're improving the quality of life for our community's animals too. In spite of COVID, we managed to complete renovations to the Jeffersonville Animal Shelter and celebrated its grand opening in December. Under Director Sarah Green's guidance, the improvements we've made at the shelter make for a more functional, healthy and nurturing environment for the animals who make their way to our facility. As I've said before, I firmly believe the way we treat and care for our animals is a reflection on who we are as a community.

An even greater reflection of ourselves is how we care for each other. 2020 was an especially taxing year for our public safety officials. But I am extremely proud to have the men and women of our police and fire departments looking after our community.

Under Chief Kenny Kavanaugh's leadership, the Jeffersonville Police Department continues to do an outstanding job keeping our residents safe while acting with bravery, compassion and professionalism.

I'm proud of the newly formed partnership between JPD and LifeSpring to help provide support when officers respond to calls involving substance abuse. Thanks to a \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, four social workers will be hired to work alongside officers. It's just the latest innovative technique employed by Chief Kavanaugh to address the ever-growing opioid epidemic in our community.

And our Fire Department, under Chief Shawn Grant, has also continued to go above and beyond the call of duty – providing leadership through first responder and fire safety services to our residents during this long stretch of uncertainty.

With Chief Grant's renewed focus on training, our fire department will soon be the hub of professional firefighter training in the region. Instead of sending our men and women elsewhere, they'll get their training right here in Jeffersonville along with other firefighters from nearby departments.

Jeffersonville continues to thrive because we remain committed to improving the quality of life for residents in every way we can.

That also means making sure we are offering great places for folks to play, gather and raise their families.

That's why I was so thrilled earlier this year when we held the grand opening for Chapel Lake Park. At 116 acres, it is the city's largest park and also the first park east of I-265. It is a show-stopper.

Never before have our parks been more important than they were during

the last year. When we were told to go home and stay away from others, parks were the only way for a lot of people to escape four walls closing in on them. That was apparent just a few months ago when we unveiled our newest park – Shirley’s Arbor – to residents of neighborhoods along Charlestown Pike and Woehrle Road. It’s a brand new 14-acre green space with more than 100 trees, walking trails and a pond that will alleviate drainage issues in the area.

I’m excited to be able to tell you that we’ll be expanding Shirley’s Arbor this year. In the few short months since we opened the park, there’s been greater use of the park than we ever anticipated. We’re now planning to construct a new playground at the park along with additional parking.

Public Art remains an integral part of our commitment to improving the quality of life. And like I’ve said many times – nothing spurs economic development more than investing in amenities to improve the life for our residents. That’s why I’m thrilled to see our new Public Arts Administrator hit the ground running.

Emily Dippie is the perfect person to continue to make Jeffersonville a better place through creativity. While COVID may have held back some projects last year, Emily is ready to get to work.

The NoCo Arts and Cultural District is getting noticed with developers interested in the area for a place to open new businesses. Construction is winding down on The Depot – an innovative and unique project that is converting shipping containers into a venue that will host concerts and other events - that will bring more people into NoCo.

When I spoke to all of you last February, I talked a lot about another important investment: Our schools and the students who walk their halls. My administration has worked hard to be a good partner to Greater Clark. We have built roads to schools to alleviate traffic issues, gifted the Nachand Fieldhouse to Franklin Square to use as its gymnasium, created Jeffersonville’s Promise to give every Jeff High graduate the opportunity at a free college education and we’re donating a portion of our tax revenues to the school system.

So, it breaks my heart that - despite of all our best efforts to be a good partner – the school board recently decided not only to eliminate certified enrichment programs like art, music and gym in some schools, but they also elected to close two more Jeffersonville schools altogether.

Sometimes one of the hardest things for me to accept is that there are some things I can’t control. Especially when it’s something I care about so deeply. I cannot tell you how disheartening it is to see four of our city’s schools closed in less than two years while other communities in the school district weren’t asked to sacrifice on the same scale. Especially at a time when Jeffersonville is experiencing record growth, both in residents and in industry.

We have been committed to lifting up our kids and helping our schools since day one. Last year I asked you to think about what YOU could do to help our kids succeed. I'm asking you again today: Are you doing everything you can? Because now, more than ever, our kids need our help and frankly, our school board's help if we want Jeffersonville to continue to be a thriving city for generations to come.

And we will thrive together!

Friends, if 2020 taught us anything it was that it's a lot easier to get through something hard when you're not doing it alone. It showed just how resilient Jeffersonville is when we stick with each other.

I know at times 2020 was frustrating, challenging and difficult. But we made it through together and all was not lost. Looking back on last year, our city just didn't endure during a very challenging moment in history. But it excelled more than any of us ever expected.

We did it together. We did it by working as a community moving forward in step with one another. One can't deny that 2020 was a year where an extraordinary community did extraordinary things.

So, as we leave here today, I encourage all of you to look back and be proud of the accomplishments we have made in Jeffersonville. But more importantly, I invite you to look forward to 2021 with us.

That's because looking forward is what sits Jeffersonville apart from other cities. With a shared vision of a community where we're always striving to do better, our potential is limitless.

There's still plenty of work to be done. Let's find a way to keep the best that came out of 2020 by moving forward knowing there's nothing that can hold us back.

Thank you.