



Andy Schor, Mayor

**Mayor Andy Schor's State of the City
Riverwalk Theatre, Lansing, MI
February 6, 2019**

Thanks, Ozay. Thanks to you and All of the Above Hip Hop Academy for kicking off the State of the City. You and your team are a testament to Lansing's creative community, and we are grateful to you for locating your business here in Lansing.

And thanks to Sienna Voo for the lovely singing of the national anthem. Sienna is a member of the Voices of Sexton Choir and a junior at Sexton High School. Thank you for sharing your talent with us here tonight.

Thanks also to Pastor Pj Anderson for the invocation. Pastor Pj is a pillar in our faith community, and we are grateful for all that you do for Lansing.

And finally, I would like to thank Brian Daniels for leading us in the pledge of allegiance. Brian is an Iraq War veteran, a Lansing resident and a Lansing small business owner. He is co-owner of emPOWER Lansing, a boxing gym on Michigan Avenue. Brian, thank you for your service to our country and for investing in Lansing. Both my wife and Chief of Staff attend classes at emPOWER which is slightly concerning but I know you will make them both even more fierce than they already are!

Thanks to all of you for joining us here at the Riverwalk Theater, one of the City's art and culture gems. Jeff Magnuson, the Chair of the Riverwalk Board, graciously opened up Riverwalk to host us all here. They accommodated us even as they are setting up for their next production, Elephant Man, starting in March, and I look forward to coming to see it when it opens!

I am proud that my family is here tonight. My wife Erin and my children Ryan and Hannah keep me grounded and energized as I work every day for Lansing. I could not do this without them. Erin, Ryan and Hannah will you please stand so we can all thank you?

And thanks to my city council partners for joining me here, as we work together to create a great future in Lansing. In 2018 we partnered together to accomplish a lot for Lansing, and we all know that was just the beginning. We have even greater things coming in 2019!

I has now been a year and a month since I took office. A year and a month since my team and I started leading this incredible city. So much has happened in that time!

One of the questions I am often asked is how this job differs from the legislature. The answer is that there is really no comparison.

I loved debating policy in the legislature, and I am very excited to have new State Representatives Sarah Anthony, Kara Hope, and Angela Witwer joining Senator Curtis Hertel in representing Lansing in the Legislature. They are here this evening, and I hope they will stand and be recognized. And we are all excited for our very own Governor Gretchen Whitmer to lead this great state of Michigan.

As a State Rep, I heard opinions on state-wide issues. As Mayor, I am able to directly affect the lives of Lansing residents, workers, and visitors. I know if your neighbor's grass is too long, if someone is speeding on your street, and I have been told about every pothole in the city. I know if the snow plow has not come to your house yet, if the plow HAS come to your house and blocked in your driveway after you shoveled, and even sometimes both of those on the same day!

I can assure you, I love being Mayor. And I love what is going on in Lansing. It has certainly been quite a year full of intense highs and lows. I will never forget the day that we stood up and announced that we are bringing a Meijer store to our downtown, along with a hotel and new housing. This one announcement checked three boxes in terms of needs in our downtown. Nor will I forget the announcement that we will have Michigan's only professional soccer team, Lansing Ignite, playing in the City at our stadium. The Ignite season will start in April, and I look forward to being at Cooley Law Stadium to cheer on the team in its inaugural season.

We did not just focus on the downtown. We announced major housing and mixed-use projects on the south side as well as on the east side. After we passed our budget, unanimously I might add – thank you to my City Council partners - we announced several projects to improve façades throughout the city.

But we cannot forget the challenges. We started the year with a massive flood, which we had to navigate by engaging volunteers and evacuating areas of the city. From this, though, came SERVE Lansing, which is our new volunteer portal where people can sign up to volunteer in Lansing. Go to servelansing.com if you want more information on how to volunteer in Lansing. We also had a tragic fire in our public housing. And this forced a top-to-bottom review of our Lansing Housing Commission properties, and we continue to work with the Housing Commission to ensure all properties remain up to code. And just last week, we faced a major snow storm emergency with temperatures dropping down to –35 degrees. We worked tirelessly with many partners throughout our city to ensure that everyone was kept safe. From our residents and visitors, to those throughout the region who were homeless and in need.

We have faced these challenges head on, and I am proud of city staff in responding to these emergencies.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the last year I have reminded you repeatedly that Lansing's time is now! In 2018 we hit the ground running. I am proud that we announced development projects, new businesses, and jobs all

across the City. Last year we announced nearly a billion dollars in new private investment in the City of Lansing. Lansing is booming.

As I already mentioned, in August I was thrilled be part of the announcement of a new Meijer grocery store, hotel and apartments on Michigan Avenue in the Stadium District. This \$41.5 million-dollar investment is a key development priority, and I am thrilled for that project to move forward and change our downtown. We also saw work on the Oliver Towers building begin, which has been vacant for many years and will now be 96 new units of housing. These projects are just the beginning of our capacity building for people to live in and enjoy Lansing's downtown!

While we are building capacity, Lansing's incredible existing businesses are thriving and hiring. In the last five years our partners at Dewpoint have gone from 100 employees to nearly 450 IT employees in the Knapp's Center.

In the northern part of our city, Loc Performance has announced an investment of \$96.5 million dollars in its Lansing facility, and they plan to hire up to 500 new employees. So, if you know any machinists or skilled trades folks who want to build things, be sure to send them to Loc.

On the southeast side of Lansing we broke ground on McLaren's new \$450 million-dollar, 52 acre campus. In three years, we will have an incredible new hospital. This critical project has already been a catalyst for other development in the area. I was excited last year to announce that the former Harley Hotel at Jolly and Dunckel will be redeveloped as well. This \$52 million-dollar project will include new housing and public improvements to the roads and infrastructure surrounding the project, taking this from a blight to a great amenity in one of the most visible entrances to the City of Lansing.

We also had great focus in Southwest Lansing last year. The former EDS site will be redeveloped into a self-storage facility. And I am very excited that the developer is partnering with the city on significant public improvements around the site to make it more walkable and improve the aesthetics of this important and highly visible corner in South Lansing.

Also on the southside, the Beacon Field Southwest outdoor soccer field project got underway at Pleasant Grove and Holmes. For those who do not know, this is a soccer field where pickup soccer can be played. It follows the successful model of our first Beacon field downtown at Ferris Park. This project is more than a soccer field, though; it's a community destination that will include walking trails and a Kaboom Playground. The community came together and successfully raised more than \$50,000 which will be matched by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Thanks to all the partners that made this happen. There are so many who helped with this incredible project...too many to call out now...but I hope everyone will check out that soccer field. You can even play on it right now. It's open year-round!

In the same neighborhood, we have come close to finalizing a new town square. This is the result of tireless work by the Southwest Action Group, LEAP, the Arts Council, several city council members, city staff, and many others. We are excited for this new gathering space, where there will be public art and people can come together and enjoy the southwest side. We can't wait for the groundbreaking this summer!

Many of the economic development projects that we are working on are a result of community members and developers and others coming to me with ideas. I love that so many people want to

invest in Lansing! When we took office, we started a review of our city property inventory. We have discovered that we have lots of vacant property that's owned by the City. In order to keep this great growth momentum going, I am announcing that the city will send out a request for proposals for many city-owned parcels over the next few months so that we can activate some of our city-owned open space. Have an idea or proposal? Respond to the RFP. We want to hear how our creative development community could transform these properties. This program, which I am calling Build Lansing, will help us continue to develop critical pieces of property as part of our larger development strategy. Lansing is open for business!

Another priority we are focusing on is our corridors. These corridors are critical to Lansing's success. They are the backbone of commercial activity, and the front door to our neighbors. In my budget last year, we increased funding for corridor façade grants from \$15,000 to \$150,000, enabling local businesses to enhance their storefronts and increase traffic. As a result, we have seen improvements in storefronts throughout Lansing. We saw Bake and Cakes on the southwest side by Miller Road and Nail'd in REOTown. And there is more to come, with a new façade at the Biggby on the west side, and the Allen Marketplace on the eastside.

There is a lot of visioning and planning work happening on our corridors. We have had Corridor Improvement Authorities for many years on Michigan Avenue and on Saginaw Street, and we have re-energized these boards with new talent and passionate volunteers who will implement an exciting vision for these corridors. Clearly Michigan Avenue has seen a lot of activity in the last year, with Arcadia Brewery, Imagine the Avenue, and the new Venue building containing great businesses like emPOWER and Strange Matter. We are also in the process of creating Corridor Improvement Authorities on MLK in SW Lansing as well as on Grand River in the northeast part of Lansing. These boards will be a great tool to sharpen and implement our vision in these crucial corridor areas of the city.

As part of this corridor and business improvement effort, we were awarded seven Opportunity Zone designations from the federal government to incent development along our commercial corridors. For developers who invest in a property in an Opportunity Zone, capital gains tax will be waived at the federal level. This is a tremendous incentive, and we are working locally and nationally with Opportunity Zone experts and funds to inject much-needed capital into these important corridors.

In downtown Lansing we continue to focus on creating a vibrant space. During the weekdays we have tens of thousands of employees converge on the city. We also have many that *live* downtown, and we will continue working to increase that residential capacity.

But with new residences and businesses downtown, we need to be strategic about next steps for this critical corridor. As part of this capacity building, I am tasking Downtown Lansing, Inc., with creating a vision that will guide this critical area.

A big piece of this visioning means effective city design. I know that sounds wonky, but design drives business and residential corridor growth. Last year we did a pilot project on Michigan Avenue called "Imagine the Avenue", to see how a different design would change how people interact with their neighborhoods and the built environment. We temporarily changed the design of the avenue and the sidewalk to see how it would promote walkability, safety, and commercial vitality. This visioning session engaged residents and those that shop on Michigan avenue to see what this area could look like. We'll

continue to explore the best ways to design city streets to make Lansing a great commercial and residential city.

Smart design can truly change the fabric of a City, which is why we are thrilled to begin the process of converting six downtown streets from one-way to two-way. Capitol Avenue, Grand Avenue, Ottawa Street, Allegan Street, Pine, and Walnut will all become two-way in the next 18 months. We are grateful to our state partners for providing the funding for this transition. The traffic signals on these new streets will be autonomous vehicle ready, making Lansing the first community in the State whose downtown is ready for autonomous vehicles.

And...once you have parked your car in our downtown, this summer we will finally be unveiling a parking app that will allow you to pay for parking through your smartphone! This will be a tremendous asset for our downtown businesses and visitors, and we look forward to moving our parking system into the 21st century.

This is all in addition to the work that we have already done for our small businesses. Last year, we held a Grow with Google event that provided small business creation tools. Lansing Community College has continued this, and we are excited for the small business assistance from Google right here in Lansing.

We were also designated as the second city to host the eBay Retail Revival program. Retail Revival launched last fall, and 49 small businesses in the City of Lansing are receiving support in the form of training, technical assistance, and a free eBay site. Local sellers have sold in all 50 states and in 88 countries, and our Lansing businesses are on track to reach \$1 million dollars in sales by the mid-year mark. We love that this project allows our local retailers to maintain a vibrant Lansing storefront and sell on the global market all at the same time.

NEIGHBORHOODS

While all this development is incredible, simply developing the city is not enough. We must have great neighborhoods and places for our residents. My first executive order created our new Department of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement, which focuses its efforts on engaging Lansing residents and using what we learn to drive decision-making.

In addition to SERVE Lansing, our inaugural Citizens Academy was a tremendous success with 24 Lansing residents spending ten weeks learning about our community. They spent time in our parks, city hall, and even in our wastewater treatment plant!

We are also heavily engaged with our residents to create a transparent process for input. Last fall we hosted four Participatory Budget Nights where we asked residents to build budgets according to their priorities. The input was fascinating and, in many cases, surprising. We are going to capitalize on this momentum by holding four more Participatory Budget nights in February and in early March. This time there's a twist: each session will focus specifically on one of four areas: economic development, neighborhoods, infrastructure and public safety.

Input from residents helps with decision-making, but as I announced last year in this speech I am also committed to using data to drive decisions for Lansing. I want to use data to determine how and where we allocate our resources. In 2018 I was chosen as one of 40 Mayors from across the world to

participate in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative. As part of that effort, I chose to take a deep dive into data and evidence and how data drives our decision-making in Lansing. Throughout the rest of this year we are working on data governance with Bloomberg and Harvard. Andi Crawford on my staff is leading a city-wide data team that is analyzing our data and breaking down silos between our departments. It turns out we have a ton of data in the City; we just have not been utilizing it well. The data team and our work with Bloomberg and Harvard is helping us create a data governance structure that we hope will create better metrics and more transparent and cost-effective decisions for our city.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Lansing is home to a vibrant cultural community as we saw earlier with Ozay and All of the Above Hip Hop Academy. To reflect this, I created the Mayor's Arts and Culture Commission last spring. This commission, chaired by Impression 5 Board Chair Erin Schor, has been working over the last six months to get its arms around where gaps exist in our arts and culture community.

The commission has committees focused on infrastructure and facilities, public art, planning, and more. Arts and culture are an integral part of what makes this community great. Cultural economic development is no longer optional; the people we want to attract to live and work in Lansing *expect* cultural opportunities. Our arts commission is pulling together the very talented arts leaders in Lansing and are helping us transform how we use, see, and place art in our City.

Just last month, the City of Lansing announced \$140,000 in Lansing Art grants to fund some incredible art projects here in Lansing. This included our 2019 Arts Impact project, called "Below the Stacks", which is a city-wide mural project designed to interpret Lansing's legacy. Again, thanks to Ozay Moore and his partner Dustin Hunt, who will be working with international artists to create 10 incredible murals throughout Lansing. These new murals will add to the many different pieces of public art that we have announced in the last year. Art such as the new mural that we have under 127, the community painting of the Pennsylvania Bridge by Potter Park Zoo, Art Path, the Lansing Sidewalk Poetry Project, and so many other great public art efforts. Public art is an expression of the creativity of our community, a powerful economic development tool, and will be a big part of our strategy to grow and sell the City of Lansing!

INFRASTRUCTURE

At the core of all the great work we do in Lansing is our infrastructure. We can't do any of this without roads and sidewalks that are passable, public safety officers that show up when we call, or toilets that flush.

We had a tremendous focus on infrastructure in year one, and that won't change throughout my term. Lansing is an older city, and aging infrastructure is a challenge. But we have plans in place to continue investment in infrastructure

Last year I held a Road Map Neighborhood Tour in each ward of the city. I heard directly from our residents their concerns and frustrations. As a result, we developed a roads plan that provides digital maps with transparent data about street repairs and funding. This roads plan is on the city website and shows all of the roads that have been fixed in the last few years, as well as the thousands of potholes that have been filled. It also shows the work that will be done on roads moving forward.

In addition to the roads fixed in this plan, we will continue to fill thousands of potholes every year. And remember – the best way to get a pothole fixed is to go to Lansing connect online or use the Lansing Connect app. This year, we filled nearly 5,000 potholes with an average turnaround time of less than 48 hours of being reported.

But roads are only part of our infrastructure. Last year we doubled the funding for sidewalk repairs, utilizing new technology. Instead of only using the asphalt ramps, which I believe the public service folks call wedges, we utilized new machines that shave the sidewalk down to the level of the adjacent piece. This resulted in 945 cuts and 186 asphalt wedges, so many sidewalks are no longer a trip hazard. We still have many more miles of sidewalks to fix, but we have made a good start in year one!

FINANCIAL HEALTH

While discussing infrastructure investment, I need to note there are many positives regarding our financial situation; however, we do still have long-term pension and health care liabilities that we will continue to address.

We, like many other Michigan communities, worked on a state-required Corrective Action Plan which we submitted to the Michigan Department of Treasury, detailing how we will be addressing legacy costs in the future. This plan had great input from our Financial Health Team. I am grateful to the FHT, as well as our city council and labor partners for all of your cooperation on this plan. While this plan was approved by the Department of Treasury, that's only the beginning. During our budget last year, we allocated what was needed from our pension funds and significant general fund contributions to ensure that we pay our Annual Required Contribution for pensions, and we even contributed more than we had to. We know that this is a long-term problem that will require city contributions and growth, assistance from the state, and reducing those costs in the future. We can't ignore this problem, and we appreciate the diverse voices and advice from the members of our Financial Health Team.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Like infrastructure, public safety is a baseline expectation for residents and visitors. I am tremendously grateful to the men and women of the Lansing Police and Fire Departments, who work hard 24/7/365 to keep us safe. That hard work has resulted in violent crime being down 14 percent in our community in the last year. Things like community policing – which Lansing pioneered – have been very effective. Also, knowing that we will see many retirements in the next year or so, we have frontloaded the hiring of police officers and firefighters so there won't be a gap in your service.

Additionally, the incredible efforts of our first responders and all City of Lansing staff during our emergency events saved people's houses and millions of dollars in damage to neighborhoods throughout the City. I am so proud of their work and all they do responding to our residents, visitors, and workers every day.

NEW COMMISSIONS

We need to hear from those in our community as we make important decisions for Lansing and work with partners throughout the region. Lansing has about 40 Boards and Commissions, each with many hard-working City residents volunteering their time. As promised last year, I have created several new commissions.

As mentioned, I created the Mayor's Arts and Culture commission. I also created a Diversity and Inclusion Commission to celebrate the great diversity that we display every day here in Lansing, and work through the issues that we see differently. This year, I am establishing two new commissions. First, I am looking to the faith community for input. We know that many people in Lansing are people of faith. Some people will never come to a community meeting, but will go to their place of worship regularly. Some people will never talk to the Mayor or council person, but *will* talk to their spiritual leader. We can't let those opinions go unheard. This year I will be creating an Inter-Faith Advisory Council, organized by the Lansing office of Community and Faith based initiatives. This council will include pastors and rabbis and imams from organized religions in Lansing. While not focused on religion, this council will address the important social issues brought up through engagement with faith leaders, who are also thought leaders in Lansing.

The other new commission to be established will be focused on the Lansing veteran community. Lansing holds a Memorial Day service every year, but we need to shine a brighter light on the activities and needs of our veterans. Today, I am issuing an Executive Order creating the Lansing Veterans Commission. This commission will be chaired by former Lansing Police Chief Mark Alley. As we focus on the people in Lansing, it's critical to include those who have sacrificed their time and talents to serve and protect Lansing and the United States. This commission will ensure that veterans are included in our decision-making processes, and show our appreciation for those who served us in all branches of the military. Can we please have all veterans stand and be recognized? Thank you for your service.

LANSING FORWARD

When I moved to Lansing in 1997, I fell in love with this city. With this community.

My wife and I bought a house and put down our roots. Our children go to the Lansing Public Schools, and we are fully engaged with Lansing. Through my 22 years here, as I have watched Lansing go through the ups and downs just as every other community has, I have realized that what truly makes Lansing a great place are the people. There are so many who love this city, including those of you here with me tonight, and those watching at home. We are passionate about this city filled with **quality** people - people who have spirit and determination and pride.

As I knocked doors, and as I held transition meetings coming into office, I heard one thing over and over – Lansing residents have pride in this city. In fact, this was a recommendation in the transition report that we released last year

I agree wholeheartedly, and I want the city to show off that pride. To show off the things that makes us like no other place.

So, as you can see, we have got some new stuff going on that shows off what this city is about. How do I look?

I love this new look and attitude for the city. Strong and standing tall. This is our new brand, but Do not worry, this does not replace our city seal that Mayor Hollister commissioned back in 1994. That seal is our formal persona, illustrating our natural beauty, strong history and status as the capital city.

But this new look helps us - me - represent the city's spirit; its culture. And my vision.

Today, I am announcing a Lansing vision plan that we are calling Lansing 2030.

Lansing will be its best self: a diverse, dense, livable and welcoming environment. Our city will offer the amenities and necessities needed to retain and sustain residents through all stages of life: children as they grow; young people starting careers; families putting down roots; established professionals looking to expand their businesses; and retirees.

We sustain this by improving and providing necessities: roads, sidewalks, housing, parks, and public safety. And we embrace our unique qualities: city design, culture, community, and livability.

Lansing has, and will continue to cultivate, a sense of city pride among its residents, which draws new residents to the area and convinces those who have left to return. The city recognizes its individualistic reputation – self-assured, confident, and proud. We take it seriously that we are the biggest and most dense city, and are the cultural and economic engine of our region.

Moving forward, we will focus on three main areas of action:

First, we will leverage Lansing’s existing diversity and employment opportunities to represent our city as an ideal community to live and thrive.

Second, we will focus on city design to improve the city’s public spaces – from roads to art – to ensure a welcoming environment.

And finally, we will diversify living options to meet residents’ changing housing and life needs. Lansing is the most affordable city in the country, and affordability allows our residents to spend their hard-earned dollars on other things for themselves and families.

You can find more about this vision by visiting www.lansingforward.com.

This vision is about the people who support Lansing in all of its endeavors. It’s about those who choose to live in Lansing, like my family did. It’s about the unique neighborhoods and people. It’s those of us who thrive *because* we live in this great city. It’s about the new American Dream, which promises so much to those who start in Lansing and stay in Lansing. It’s about density and walkability. Cool stuff and amenities. Parks within a 10-minute walk.

It’s about getting to the commercial center in minutes, and housing you want or need or can afford. It’s about opportunities for all kinds of jobs and all kinds of people.

In Lansing, we may not be people who have acres of land for a house—but we also do not have long commutes. We may not have vistas of farmland—but we do boast some amazing urban farms and locally crafted food. Lansing is a city in the best sense of the word, and we bring the vibrancy and energy that only a city can. That’s what our new vision and brand is about.

Lansing people are my kind of people, and it's time to celebrate that.

Of course, this work would not be possible without the support of our generous community partners: Dewpoint, the Board of Water and Light, and CATA. We appreciate their support, and welcome any other Lansing partners to be part of this exciting effort.

I also want to acknowledge the talented creatives across our city who show their pride by making Lansing merchandise — check all of them out! This brand sure is not going to replace all their work, but it *will* give us at City Hall a way to represent Lansing's authentic culture when the seal might seem a little too formal.

You will start to see this new look and feel as we work to promote Lansing and the talented people who live here, entice new people to come, and show other cities what Lansing's got to offer. If you want to pick something up like Ozay and I have, we have a few things out in the lobby. And Do not forget to look for this campaign on social media—we can't wait to show off our great people.

WRAP UP

Lansing's Time is NOW. 2018 was an exceptional year, and I am thrilled to kick off 2019 with a positive vision and campaign. Thank you again to the Riverwalk Theater and thank you all for joining me this evening.

Thank you.

Ozay back on stage: Do not forget to come see the Elephant Man here at Riverwalk Theater beginning next month!

Please join us over at the Exchange after the speech for an unofficial gathering to debrief and raise a glass to celebrate this city and to celebrate all of you – my kind of people.