



CITY NEWS



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Mayor's 2011 State of the City Address

Distinguished members of the Wichita City Council, honored guests, family, friends and Wichitans, thank you for attending the 2011 State of the City Address. It is my honor to serve as your Mayor, and it is my honor to address you tonight.

I'd like to recognize Vice Mayor Jeff Longwell and City Council members Sue Schlapp, Lavonta Williams, Paul Gray, Janet Miller and Roger Smith who joined us earlier this month. Roger is interim Council Member for District III replacing Jim Skelton and, on behalf of the Council, I want to thank Jim for his dedication to serving our community.

2010 was a difficult but productive year. Throughout the past twelve months, we all learned that we are dealing with a new reality: a new economy -- where jobs are limited, revenues are restricted, and families continue to struggle. Just as you have been forced to reevaluate your personal budgets, we as government, were also forced to reevaluate the public budget in order to deal with the economic downturn.

I appreciate the faith that you have placed in me to lead us through these challenges. Throughout the year, we listened, we learned, and through the dedicated work of this Council, we acted responsibly with reduced revenues and stabilized our city during a time of fear and uncertainty.

In 2010:

- We responded to the realities of the new economy by protecting and stabilizing jobs in the aviation industry
- We responded to declining revenues without increasing the mill levy, raising taxes or affecting the delivery of core services
- We launched a community driven plan to revitalize our downtown, looking to create jobs, attract tourism and improve the quality of life for our citizens
- We continued to restructure and streamline city government as well as improve access to government services.

In the midst of this, we continued our work to care for the less fortunate, the unemployed, the hungry and the homeless. This Council has worked to bring Wichita together recognizing that

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we are stronger united than we ever will be divided- and recognizing that faith in the good will of people can produce greatness.

You may recall that one of my priorities as Mayor has been the “No More Hungry Kids” campaign. It is unacceptable to have children in this city who are unable to concentrate in school or who go to bed hungry because they have not had enough to eat.

But we made a difference. Through our efforts, we raised \$33,004, fed 5,698 hungry children through the school year, and the children in this city are better and stronger because of our efforts.

These gestures of compassion and generosity are what make us a community to be proud of ... a community united on strength and good will ... a community that inspires each of us to be more and do more, even when we have less.

(Accountability / Access to Government)

As we move into 2011, I am proud of the steps we’ve taken to increase our fiscal accountability while continuing to improve the level of public engagement and access to government services.

We acted responsibly in protecting your tax dollar.

We reduced the city budget by \$9 million over the past two years, and we did so while protecting core services, increasing street maintenance funding, reorganizing and streamlining management systems, and improving customer service.

Our commitment to public engagement on the budget process was, as the year before, especially transparent as the City Manager held public meetings requesting input and ideas.

In the face of this, we continued to protect the services that we, as a Council, have defined as the core and essential services of city government:

- Public safety
- Strong infrastructure
- And responsible economic development.

Wise decisions through the strong leadership of the Council allowed us to address our reduced revenues in a responsible fashion.

Instead of raising taxes or incurring debt to support operations, we worked hard to do more with less, learning to be smarter about how we use our limited resources.

Our commitment to the effective delivery of services was unwavering in that process.

With assistance from the Hugo Wall School at WSU and extensive public input we created a better and more cost-effective way to provide recreational programs to the community. We will

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launch a stronger, customer driven system later this year. This streamlined approach will save the taxpayers \$1 million.

We reorganized custodial services in public buildings and approved the Manager's recommendation that his entire senior management team begin taking furloughs.

Let me reemphasize this. The City of Wichita's entire senior management team will begin taking furloughs – sharing in the hardship we are all experiencing through this new economic reality.

We adopted a policy that governs property tax exemptions and extensions, focusing on businesses that continue to invest in Wichita and its jobs – but holding them accountable for commitments they have made about capital investment and job creation.

After discovering errors in the projection of water revenues and the methodology for calculating debt requirements, we reorganized the Water and Sewer Utility, and instituted various financial reforms to protect the taxpayers.

While the proposed solid waste plan has stirred strong sentiment in the community, it's a starting point that will allow us to come together to determine best practices for establishing price predictability and encouraging recycling while protecting jobs in the solid waste industry. The issue serves as a good reminder that leadership does not always mean finding the easy solution. It does, however, mean finding the right solution for our community, and I look forward to continuing discussions as we strive to come together to reach our common goals.

In addition to improving the level of engagement, we've taken steps to increase access to government. We created and launched a new web program that allows residents to use wichita.gov to report:

- Graffiti,
- Vandalism,
- Or facility or grounds maintenance problems.

Given the increasing use of the internet, we are hopeful that this convenient tool will engage more residents in working with us to improve this great City.

In 2011, we will also be opening a customer call center that will provide residents with one number to call to register concerns, get information, and seek resolutions to problems at City Hall. They no longer need to know or understand the city directory in order to receive assistance. All you have to do is dial:

- W-I-C-H-I-T-A
- That's 942-4482

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(Economic Development)

We cannot reflect on 2010 without taking a hard look at our efforts to keep our people working. Through the use of various economic drivers and tools, we were able to save 745 jobs, create 435 jobs and leverage \$94.4 million in capital investment in Wichita.

The biggest news of 2010, however, is that we said NO. We said NO to the State of Louisiana that tried to lure Hawker Beechcraft. We said NO to the other states that contacted our aviation companies on a daily basis, attempting to obtain our plants and our jobs.

We said No and kept our aviation companies here, stabilizing jobs for years and guaranteeing work for our families.

The deal with Hawker Beechcraft announced last December keeps at least 4,000 jobs and all existing product lines in Wichita until at least 2020. Estimates suggest that the City will see a \$14 million impact as the result of retaining this company.

In July of last year, Bombardier agreed not to move any existing operations out of Wichita during the life of bonds issued by the State of Kansas to support the production of its new composite Learjet 85. This production will support:

- 600 jobs,
- 300 of them new positions in Wichita.

As I suggested at the time of the Hawker deal, this was a declaration that Kansas and Wichita will fight to keep its aircraft industry. As I said then, "You're not going to take what's most important to us, and that's our aviation industry." Simply put, we will not lose these jobs. Period.

In efforts to keep people working, the completion of the community-driven Downtown Master Plan will lead us to a point where ultimately the private investment exceeds public investment by a 15 to 1 ratio.

The Master Plan provides us with the framework for a downtown resurgence that is expected to bring in new companies, create new jobs and increased property tax revenue.

A great example is the decision of Cargill to build a:

- \$14.7 million,
- 75,000-square foot Innovation Center
- Employing 65 people in the downtown core.

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It's expected to open this summer and is designed to meet building criteria that expands urban walkability.

Last, but certainly not least, we approved the use of revenue bonds for the new Warren IMAX Theatre in West Wichita. This attraction is already bringing people from across the State into Wichita to:

- See movies,
- Buy dinner,
- Stay at hotels
- And spend money in our community as a result of having the country's largest digital IMAX.

(Partnerships)

As we move into 2011, recognizing our new economy and its reality, we realize the increasing importance of working in partnership with regional, state and federal governments to share resources and make the most of your tax dollars.

Additionally, we will be:

- Continuing our support for a passenger rail system.
- And aggressively pursuing continued funds for:
 - Affordable airfares,
 - The National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR),
 - The National Center for Aviation Training (NCAT) and
 - And the Center of Innovation for Biomaterials in Orthopedic Research (CIBOR).

On the federal level, we will be pursuing funds for:

- The new airport terminal,
- The Dry Creek Retention Pond
- And the Equus Beds ASR funding.

(Strong Neighborhoods / Quality of Life)

While we may from time to time not see eye to eye on every issue, on this, we can agree: we

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must keep our children safe and sound in neighborhoods that protect the investments we make in our homes and our quality of life.

I am especially proud of our efforts to maintain strong neighborhoods bettering the quality of life for all of us.

As I mentioned earlier, we increased street maintenance funding in our 2011 operating budget, now providing for a total of \$6.6 million for street maintenance and repairs – this ensures that all neighborhood streets are safe and sound.

Our goal is to reach \$10 million in this fund as our commitment to this core service is strong. In addition, we have reorganized the way we repair deteriorated streets.

Under new policy, streets are prioritized by need and the worst are repaired first and as quickly as possible.

- This year, we held 91 neighborhood cleanups, resolved 37 dangerous building condemnation cases and responded to 86 emergency requests to secure open buildings.
- We facilitated the location of a new TOPS facility in Evergreen Park, an effort dedicated to school readiness for children in poverty.
- We developed a child and family education project for the Hispanic and Latino community.
- We approved the multi-use path that connects McAdams and Grove Parks.
- We approved the Midtown Neighborhood Stormwater Master Plan.
- We approved enhancements to the 47th Street South and I-135 – providing a safer interchange that will support additional economic development.
- We have a Task Force reviewing building code standards for residential foundation and slab floor construction, and will soon be making recommendations for enhanced building codes and inspection procedures for new homes and home additions.

In discussing strong neighborhoods and their infrastructure needs, we must also address public safety and our efforts to keep our families and children safe. Our continued emphasis on strong law enforcement is unwavering, even in light of our budget challenges.

In cooperation with Sedgwick County, we agreed to a settlement on suggested amounts outstanding for the maintenance of prisoners at the Sedgwick County jail.

- We broke ground on the Heartland Preparedness Center, the nation's first homeland defense center merging city and county public safety and the military.

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- The Wichita Police Department held 101 IMPACT meetings that included more than 1500 residents allowing officers to share information about major crime issues, trends, and hear directly from residents.
- We charged 207 documented gang members with 512 state felony crimes. In addition, we indicted 7 gang members for felony crimes.
- We decreased the number of:
 - Gang related drive-bys by 62%,
 - Gang related homicides by 54%
 - And drive-by shootings by 57%.

(Healthy / Compassionate Community)

Lastly, I want to talk tonight about what I believe makes us strong, both physically and emotionally.

Our physical health is a gift that we must protect in order to maintain our strength.

To raise awareness about our personal health, we held the second Mayor's 5K walk / run as part of the new Prairie Fire Marathon - 926 people participated in the Mayor's 5K, 3398 ran the marathon. Hopefully both initiatives will expand in 2011.

Our emotional strength is equally important to us. Each of us strives to make a difference in this world. Serving others makes that difference. Time and time again, I have seen the people of Wichita make this statement absolutely true.

- From Cargill's donation of 2,400 turkeys and \$50,000 to the Kansas Food Bank,
- To the \$15.8 million donated to this year's United Way campaign and 20,000 items donated for the Salvation Army's winter clothing distribution – Wichita's giving and service to others is indeed what helps us stand strong.

In addition to our work on the No More Hungry Kids campaign, I will continue my work toward reducing hunger by continuing to support programs that feed those in need.

I applaud the efforts of the Catholic Diocese to open a second Lord's Diner in Planeview. As long as there is need, we will not turn away.

The same is true about our care and concern for the homeless. This year, while working on transit barriers for homeless youth, we participated in an agency coalition for these individuals in our community. As we move forward, we must work harder to end the situation of homeless youth in this City.

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Many of you have seen the news coverage about young people legally out of the child protection services system who have nowhere to live. They live on the streets, under bridges, and in the cold.

In 2011, I will become personally involved in meetings with all appropriate partners to put an end to this tragedy.

(Conclusion)

While 2010 was indeed a challenging but productive year, we have much to look forward to in 2011. As we advance into brighter times ahead, we must continue our commitments to funding our core services while continuing some additional efforts that merit highlighting:

- We must make sure that everyone who wants a job has a job. To do this, we must continue to diversify our job base, working to expand job opportunities with wind energy, composites, and more.
- We must bring Southwest Airlines to Wichita. The first step is ensuring that the Legislature continues funding our Affordable Airfares program.
- Second is pursuing Southwest Airlines with the same vigor and resolve with which we protected our aviation jobs. We were ready for Southwest in 2010 with funding in hand – and must be ready in 2011.
- We must bring private investment into the downtown core, ensuring a significant return on investment for our efforts to revitalize the front porch of our city.
- We must solidify our relationships with newly elected officials at the county, state and federal levels, making certain that the needs of Wichita and our residents are in the forefront of their policy decisions.
- We must continue to be responsive to you. Building on our belief that government at all levels belongs to the people.
- We must continue our efforts that expand citizen engagement.
- We must provide improved access to city services
- And we must provide transparency in all that we do.

We can and will get through our challenges. The heart of Wichita lies in the hearts of each of you, and I thank you for what you have done to make this City a better place, a stronger community that believes in itself and the good will of others.

I thank you for the support you have extended to me and the Council as we strive to provide responsible leadership in this new reality, this new economy that asks us to be more and do more, even when we have less.

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Together, we can and will stay strong in the face of adversity -- and as a result, we will be a stronger community as we move into the better times that undoubtedly lie ahead.

Thank you. God bless you, God bless America and God bless Wichita.

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