



# City Of Wichita Web Document

## State of the City Address

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Distinguished members of the Wichita City Council, honored guests, family, friends and Wichitans, thank you for attending the 2012 State of the City Address. It is my honor to serve as your Mayor, and it is my honor to address you tonight.

I want to acknowledge the absence of Council Member Janet Miller who is mourning the loss of her mother. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family.

When I stood here before you in 2010, we talked about how we, elected officials and the community, had worked together to address the global economic crisis and historic recession. In 2011, we discussed the many ways in which we stabilized the city by responding to what had become a new fiscal reality.

Tonight, I want to share my thoughts on how that new reality continues yet today but how we have continued to stabilize the city through a new way of thinking. This new way of thinking has called upon us to find the right solutions for our community, not the easy ones. It has demanded that we ask big picture questions and take long-term views of how we conduct business. We must find solutions in a proactive, not reactive manner. It has required that we act, not with partisan agendas, but that we continue to be courageous in finding the right solutions for our community... a community still struggling to fully rebound from the difficulties that have been placed before us.

And tonight, I stand before you to tell you that while we remain challenged by dwindling revenues and continuing obligations, we are healthy, we are focused, we are moving forward as a shining star on the horizon of communities facing economic hardship. We will NOT be a Detroit, Michigan, that could run out of cash by this spring and faces \$200 million in accumulated debt – or a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with more than \$300 million in outstanding debt, – or a Central Falls, Rhode Island, the smallest city in the smallest state, a city with an annual budget of under \$17 million but with \$80 million in unfunded liabilities.

We are NOT one of the 100 municipalities across the country whose Mayors contemplated bankruptcy at the beginning of last year.

We are Wichita!

A city that has been thinking smarter, proactively and successfully planning for our new economic reality. Despite the fact that our property tax dollars have been flat for the past three years, this is the 18th year in a row that we have not increased the property tax rate! Staffing realignments saved \$6.4 million in 2011, most city employees have foregone pay raises for two years, and senior-level management took furlough days.

Our focus on:

- Energy savings initiatives;
- Mitigation of rising insurance premiums; and

- Streamlining has left us stable.

We stand strong as a forward-thinking city built on;

- Powerful public engagement and good, thoughtful government;
- The reliable delivery of services to residents;
- The prudent use of the tax dollar based on return on investment; and
- Still we recognize the need to protect those who are in most need of our protection – the elderly, the disabled, the homeless, the poor.

Unlike in past speeches, where I focused on separate areas of interest to the community, tonight I want to share some good news from 2011, knowing that we should rightfully celebrate our accomplishments and progress:

In outlining our top priorities in my speech last year, I said this to you: “We must bring Southwest Airlines to Wichita” – and we did.

We planned. We pursued. And we negotiated. As a result, Southwest has committed to Wichita, continuing Air Tran service to Atlanta until the merger is complete. But then what?

We must ensure that the Kansas Legislature passes Affordable Airfares, a program that continues to keep average airfares low, saving passengers about \$64 million a year. We need that appropriation from the State of Kansas in order to allow Southwest to eventually expand its service. I hope you will work with us in doing everything possible to let our legislators know that we want Southwest flying out of Wichita to multiple cities across the country in 2013. We want it. We need it. And together, we can make it a reality.

The unemployment rate in the Wichita area fell to 6.9% in December, the lowest rate in nearly 3 years. Through incentives focused on public-private partnerships that support new jobs, we have generated nearly \$355 million in private sector investment and almost 1000 jobs.

We will stay the course on incentivizing job growth, especially in light of the recent Boeing announcement that has caused us job losses. We will incentivize new jobs – be it downtown or in the suburbs, as our people who want to work must be able to work.

Learning lessons from the Boeing experience, be assured that we are strengthening all our clawback policies. This Council is committed to the maximum return on investment for our taxpayers.

We also recognize our recent commitment to a Bombardier Learjet expansion at Mid-Continent Airport which is projected to create 450 new engineering, test flight and information technology jobs. The major significance of this project is that it is one step toward our long-term goal of diversification.

And as you may have heard, other aviation companies are expanding. To them we say, “We want you. We’re open for business!”

Our new Downtown Incentives Policy ensures that developers are significantly invested in all projects and that taxpayers are protected in the use of any incentives for job growth.

The city is committed to funding public assets – parking garages, parks and street improvements – in order to attract additional private investment. And so far it’s working -- as private projects include:

- The proposed Ambassador Hotel with a 3-to-1 private to public investment ratio.
- The new Kansas Leadership Center.
- The renovated Drury-Broadview Hotel and its extensive riverbank improvements.
- The Fairfield Inn and Suites and the Cargill Innovation Center.

There is more to come downtown – and we are committed to our new policies that encourage private investment while protecting the taxpayer.

Our Recreation Strategic Plan, developed after months of research and public engagement, has been implemented and is showing early signs of success. Through streamlining staff, targeting programs and improving marketing, we have served nearly 6,000 new participants and saved approximately \$1 million. As the result of strengthened emphasis on community partnerships, Butler County Community College is leasing space in Boston Park's recreation center for classes in cooking and hotel and restaurant management. This resulted in new revenues and additional educational opportunities for residents.

Later this year, single stream recycling will be offered by all residential solid waste providers in Wichita. Built on the concepts of the free market, this system allows residents to have the option of recycling while choosing their own haulers and comparing costs in order to find the price that best meets their needs.

Increased diligence by the City Manager's office involving financial foresight, streamlining and proactive planning has been productive for us. Bond refunding efforts have reduced the City's debt service by \$16.2 million.

This approach to reducing debt will continue.

We're making significant changes to our IT system – with benefits across-the-board to citizens, employees and the broader community. Citizen access to services has been improved through increased Internet capabilities as citizens may now pay court fines and gain information on court dockets through [wichita.gov](http://wichita.gov).

Mid-Continent Airport has upgraded its wireless network throughout the terminal, providing patrons with better accessibility and usage capabilities.

Grant funding from the Knight Foundation has allowed wireless access to the Internet and to library resources while the entire library catalog is now available in smart phone format.

Neighborhood services and public safety remain a priority for this Council. Last year, we held 78 neighborhood cleanups, resolved 50 dangerous building condemnation cases and responded to 88 emergency requests to secure open buildings. Over 80% of the long-term boarded-up buildings identified under the Neglected Building Registration Program have been un-boarded and repaired or removed.

We continue to see deterioration in our neighborhood infrastructure and, as a result, have increased street maintenance dollars from \$6 million to \$10 million in 2014. By increasing those funds and reevaluating pavement life cycles and return on investment, we hope to maximize our ongoing investments in neighborhood streets.

Over seven months of meetings resulted in new and enhanced housing construction standards so we will never again see the terrible conditions that surfaced in the Maple Shade subdivision last year. Our citizens deserve better and our work and commitment to solutions should prevent these problems from occurring in the future.

Energy efficiency programs have reduced utility costs in public housing while 2,600 families were assisted with housing vouchers last year and over 100 of them were veterans.

The Police Department connected with 1,500 citizens through their IMPACT meetings. Efforts to reduce gang activity continue through aggressive action and we're continuing to make a difference. Gang-related drive-bys are down 30% and gang-related assaults are down 28%. I've said it before, and I'll say it again – Gangs are not welcome here – and I am proud of the Police Department's continued work on relaying that message loud and clear.

In addition the Police department has added body-worn cameras. They are a tool that will assist police by

ensuring integrity and accountability. They also enhance transparency and community trust.

The Wichita Fire Department Regional Training Center opened its doors. It is a 25,000 square foot training facility that can be configured into different sized meeting spaces. One of the special features is the increased ability to use digital media including video conferencing with the Fire Stations.

In partnership with Sedgwick County and the Kansas National Guard, the Heartland Readiness Center at I-135 and K-96 continues to progress. Monies have been appropriated in the Capital Improvement Budgets for design and construction of a law enforcement and emergency communications training facility on this land, with expected completion in 2015.

We will finally be constructing a new flyover at 13th and I-235, providing a long-awaited route over the Big Ditch and other construction projects include necessary improvements to the Kellogg and I-235 Interchange. We look forward to increased safety when the project is complete by 2017.

East Kellogg improvements from Webb to Greenwich will allow easy access from the west to the eastside of the City. The state will partner with us in the cost of this construction.

Much needed improvements to the 47th Street corridor, including the 47th and I-135 interchange, have been completed.

Discussions are currently underway with private developers interested in adding new businesses and jobs now that the infrastructure has been improved.

The NOMAR International Plaza opened in April of last year and 21st Street from Waco to Broadway was reconstructed to better serve the area.

The connection of the K-96 Bike Path and the Canal Route Bike Path provides 31 continuous miles for bike riding spanning from Central and K-96 to the area near Cessna and Planeview Parks.

Despite ongoing economic challenges, we continue to be successful through various tourism initiatives. Hosting the national USA Track and Field Junior Olympics brought 7,000 participants, 42,000 people through the gate, and resulted in a boost of approximately \$20 million to the local economy.

The Prairie Fire Marathon along with the NCAA Women's March Madness Basketball Tournament served as additional successful tourism and sporting initiatives.

And lastly, of personal importance to me.

Following my pledge last year to become personally involved, we now have a Task Force that meets here at City Hall on a regular basis to address the problems of youth homelessness.

Community-wide agency representatives and stakeholders are working to identify gaps, barriers, assets and long-term system needs as we struggle to find solutions to young people – in sometimes young people with babies- living on the street.

I look forward to our collaborative efforts being productive so that all of us can rest well at night knowing that our youth are not out in the cold without the kind of assistance they need ... and deserve.

In regard to adult homelessness, we have now implemented the second program recommended by the Task Force on Ending Chronic Homelessness and have opened the Homeless Resource and Referral Center. This is a one stop shop for the homeless to receive services on-site and referrals to programs to address their needs. This program comes on the heels of the Housing First program in which 60 persons who met HUD's definition

of chronic homelessness were provided housing.

As you've heard tonight, there is indeed good news to share. Some of it's large, some of it's small, some of it's important to you, some of it's important to your neighbors. But all of these efforts reflect that we have continued to act responsibly to stabilize our community in these difficult times.

We have been courageous.

Pushing back on those who want to divide us with partisan agendas.

Pushing back on those who want to find quick and easy solutions instead of the right solutions.

Pushing back on those who want to spread misinformation and provide simplistic answers to very complicated challenges.

Now, as we look forward to the future, continuing to face revenue shortfalls and financial challenges, we must take hold of some very serious issues.

We have streamlined.

We have outsourced.

We have reduced staffing levels.

We have cut over \$20 million in expenditures from this budget.

Now in a courageous and thoughtful manner, we must come together to decide how to move forward.

How do we continue to fund our economic development initiatives that allow us to keep jobs for our people?

How do we continue to reduce our reliance on manufacturing jobs and instead diversify into other industries?

How do we continue to fund our transit system upon which hundreds of Wichitans rely to get to and from work?

How do we fund the 11% decrease in federal funding in Community Development Block Grants that are used to replace sidewalks, fund home repairs, and provide employment programs for our youth?

How do we manage the 37% decrease in federal HOME Investment funds that provide homeownership opportunities for low- to moderate-income citizens and have replaced blighted properties with new, safe and affordable housing?

How will we respond?

Will we be left behind or will we step up, working together to protect our quality of life and our people?

Today, I am announcing that we will be launching a very serious public engagement process, in coordination with other efforts, to bring people together to discuss these questions.

We need your input in order to prioritize our needs and figure out how to fund them.

I ask all of you to stand with me today in committing to finding long-term solutions to the challenges we face. Stand with me today to show that we are united – pledge that you will attend these Task Force meetings as

we search for answers on how to continue to do more with less. Stand with me in committing to stay the course on non-partisan politics on this City Council, doing the right thing, not the easy thing. Stand with me in moving Wichita forward where we will continue to be a city envied and respected by others - a city of new jobs, safe neighborhoods for our children, a vibrant downtown, and a place of protection for those in need. If you stand with me today, we will get through our challenges.... And we will never be a Detroit, Harrisburg, or Central Falls.

We are Wichita!

And together we will succeed.

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

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