

# **Mayor Lloyd Winnecke**

# STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS MARCH 27, 2012

Presented to:

The Downtown Potary Qub of Evansville

On this date in 1812, Hugh McGary purchased 440 acres from the federal government and created his home and a trading post at what is now Main and Riverside. A couple of years later, our city's first plat was laid out and the community was named after a friend of McGary's, Colonel Robert Evans.

McGary had to walk to Vincennes to purchase the original tract of land. Imagine that for a moment. He had to walk to Vincennes.

Fast forward two hundred years: later this year, we anticipate the completion of Interstate 69 from Evansville to Crane, a marvel many of us thought would never occur. Then imagine the effort and angst of Hugh McGary, as he made the extraordinary effort to found our city all those years ago.

Truth be told, it took less time to walk to Vincennes, buy the land, walk back and forth to his new city than to build I-69. Thank goodness for Hugh McGary, as well as those modern day pioneers who have fought for our Interstate.

Today, we are gathered together in customary fashion to discuss the status of our great city and take the opportunity to look forward at the year ahead.

Having only been in office since January 1<sup>st</sup>, our Administration has worked diligently in short order to change the "culture of local government" and focus our resources.

I sought the office of Mayor because, like you, I love our city and want to see it achieve its full potential. I believe our city is poised for action.

That's why I'm proud to share with you today that *Evansville is ready for positive progress.* 

#### Evansville is ready to be a destination for jobs.

During the campaign, our pledge was to make jobs --- job one. I'm pleased to report our jobs team is working on 12 different economic development prospects. They are not just busy, they are VERY busy. I have charged them with following up on every single lead, no matter how large or small, while ensuring our existing employers remain viable in our community.

I'm excited that Earthcare Energy wants to make Evansville home for a new manufacturing center that they say will conservatively create 120 jobs in three years. They will occupy 60-thousand square feet at Park 41, the former Whirlpool plant. In addition to new jobs, Earthcare has agreed to a revenue sharing arrangement with the city. What makes this opportunity truly unique, in fact the first of its kind in Evansville, is that not only will Earthcare re-pay the city's incentives back within two years, but they will also pay the city \$32 million over 15 years...AND...they will utilize as many local vendors as possible in order to increase the capacity of our existing businesses. In fact, Company leaders have already engaged Flanders Electric in early discussions about a potential partnership. I'm pleased that the city council approved this incentive package.

And speaking of Park 41, once Earthcare sets up shop, that building will be 55-percent occupied.

Our administration is working with the State of Indiana and local investors about the creation of an Angel Investment Group to encourage and mentor local entrepreneurs.

I can also report that Evansville is ready for new job growth and new technology based on a recent bus trip to the Crane Naval Surface War Station. We invited business and education leaders to explore the federal research lab there to see how we can help facilitate the transfer of military technology to the private sector to create jobs. As a result of our trip, our jobs team has already had several follow up conversations with some of participants looking for more in depth discussions with Crane.

### Evansville is ready to be a cleaner city.

Our Clean Evansville initiative is a hit! The mayor's office leads a monthly cleanup of one section of our city. On the first Saturday of each month we target a different section of the city for cleanup.

In January, we targeted the heart of the city --- Main Street. We had teams start at Garvin Park and work their way to the Ford Center and we had other teams start at Kids Kingdom and the riverfront and work their way to the Ford Center.

In February, on the coldest day of year, we had 80 volunteers join us. We targeted a large area: the Lloyd Expressway to Morgan Avenue bounded by Green River Road to Burkhardt Road.

Earlier this month, we focused on another large area of the east side. My team alone tackled Green River Road from the Lloyd Expressway to Washington Avenue.

A special thanks to Todd Chamberlin and his team at Allied Republic Waste and over 400 volunteers that have joined the effort so far to pick up an estimated 563 bags of trash...six thousand pounds of litter.

It's not important for people to just join us on the first Saturday of each month, although we would love it if they could. The primary objective is to create a greater sense of community pride and build awareness about litter. In fact, groups such as the Lorraine Neighborhood Association have taken our cue and have held their own litter pick up days. We know others are doing the same.

I received a great note from a parent of a Hebron School student thanking me for our commitment to a clean city. She was thrilled that part of her daughter's homework assignment is to pick up three pieces of litter a day.

We partner with Keep Evansville Beautiful on this project. Jennifer Mason is the point person there, and with new Executive Director Cheryl Musgrave, KEB is equally supportive of phase two of Clean Evansville: the business phase.

We've approached a number of businesses in the city, and they've all said "yes" so far, about taking the Clean Evansville Business Pledge. It is what the name says: a commitment by those businesses to keep their property litter free. We're up to 20 businesses so far with more to come.

## Evansville is ready to be a healthier city.

I don't know about you, but I was disappointed Evansville was designated the most obese city in the country last year. The 2012 rankings are out, and we've dropped out of the top ten most obese cities.

But nonetheless we still have a stigma of obesity. And it's my goal we never make that list again!

Recently, our office hosted two different summits --- one focused on health initiatives in the city and the most recent on fitness. As a result of input from these meetings, the mayor's office has identified three action items to make Evansville a healthier city.

First, and foremost, our Parks Department is developing a family exercise program for our city parks. We're also organizing a speaker/exercise bureau that will link fitness and exercise experts with businesses, schools and civic groups.

Most importantly, our efforts will be fun and inspiring. Look for a great exercise video --- shot in high definition --- that will be posted to the Mayor's You Tube Channel in the near future. We'll encourage civic groups, church groups, scout troops and businesses

to produce their OWN exercise video. In fact, this Rotary Club could produce its own video --- theoretically of course.

With the explosion of new media, this is an innovative, fun way to encourage folks to be creative and find their own inspirations to get fit.

I think you will like our video...here's one hint: go, you chicken fat, go! More to come soon.

#### Evansville is ready to battle our meth problem once and for all.

Like you, I'm disgusted with seemingly daily accounts of meth related fires and crimes. Since taking office, we've assembled a task force to help us develop a smart focus on our community war on meth. We have all kinds of great minds at the table, including representatives from the medical community, treatment and addiction experts, landlords, neighborhood associations, the real estate community and of course public safety leaders.

This is a devastating problem, and there is no shortage of ideas on how best to attack it. It's my intent that in the coming weeks, we will announce a strategic partnership that will have a meaningful impact on this problem.

In the meantime, our police chief and fire chief are doing everything in their power to ensure their forces have the necessary tools to battle this epidemic.

### Evansville is ready for further growth and development

We've already cut red tape in city government. We've partnered with the City Council to amend a number of ordinances that will make it easier to do business in Evansville. Among those improvements:

- You can now actually submit building plans AND building permits online. Gone
  are the days where a trip to the civic center is required to file those documents.
- We've also reduced the amount of wait time for inspections by half, from 16 working hour waits to eight. This accelerated timeline will produce savings for developers.
- We've also eliminated some "nickel and dime fees" that were frequently attached
  to the end of a project. So, we've cut this \$25-\$100 fee and again eliminated the
  need for builders and developers to stop what they were doing to make another
  trip to the City Hall.

As you can see, our goal is to create an environment that is more conducive for investment in our city.

Even with these improvements and others, dealing with city government can be a daunting task. It's a maze of bureaucracy, fees, permitting, and in some cases, little known requirements that make development difficult.

So we've taken the step of creating the position of Project Manager in the Building Commissioner's office. Instead of a commercial developer going to potentially 14 different city-county departments for approvals, our Project Manager will walk developers through the process so there are no surprises...relating either to permitting or fees.

We want those making investments in our city to understand how "the system" works, and we think assigning a respected and knowledgeable city employee to that task will pave the way for smoother and less cumbersome interactions with city government.

### **Evansville is ready for a vibrant downtown.**

The Ford Center is already a success and a magnet for downtown. Since opening on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 373,164 people have attended events in the Ford Center. That's 373,164 people with access to our shops, restaurants and bars. There is definitely a new level of excitement, especially with the increased availability of housing in the downtown area.

In fact, I'm excited to announce that your mayor and first lady will soon have a downtown address and if all goes well we'll be living on Main Street by the first of June.

Today marks the 87<sup>th</sup> day of our administration (not that I'm counting). In the Civic Center, we're encouraging a renewed focus on customer service. No matter what city department with whom you are interacting, we want it to be a positive experience.

Our team has many new faces, as I thought that it was important to bring a fresh perspective to many aspects of city government, but at the same time, we were fortunate to retain several department heads that have proven themselves through quality service to our city.

Speaking of quality public service, I'd like to take this opportunity to publically acknowledge a fine, elected officeholder who recently announced her retirement. City Clerk Alberta Matlock has served Evansville with distinction. She is stepping down on June first. I'm personally grateful for the kindness and assistance she has extended to our administration during our transition.

A number of our department heads are here today. And I'd like them to stand be recognized. These are the individuals that keep your government running smoothly every day. Please join me in applauding their effort to serve your city government

In preparing for this presentation, I reached out to all of our department heads for input into their areas. There are so many positive things going on, but here are just a few of the highlights:

Police Chief Billy Bolin has, in an effort to make our parks even safer, assigned a Sergeant to the Parks Unit who will serve as a liaison between the Parks and Police Departments He's also acquired our new neighborhood nuisance surveillance vehicle, called "The Guardian." You may recall that this was referenced during last year's campaign and I'm pleased that Chief Bolin and his team have moved quickly to get this project rolling. It's being retrofitted now. Look for a roll out this spring. He's also created a joint gang unit with the Prosecutor Nick Herrmann's office. They are doing solid work to make our city safer.

Fire Chief Mike Connelly is examining the framework of a new fitness assessment, health and wellness program for firefighters. The goal is to improve lifelong quality of life for the public and firefighters by having the healthiest, most fit and best prepared workforce possible. The chief is also overseeing the installation of mobile computer data terminals in our vehicles. This is an important step in ensuring that the men and women of the Evansville Fire Department have as much information as possible when responding to an emergency call.

Transportation Services Director Todd Robertson is doing a great job over our public works area, which includes METS bus system. With the assistance of METS Director Tony Kirkland and Operations Manager Jennifer Fehribach, METS has totally revamped our U.S. 41 route and the ridership is very strong.

Before the revised 41 Connection bus route was launched, there had only been 420 total riders from October through mid-February. Now the bus has the flexibility to make multiple stops, and ridership has increased dramatically. Since the formation of the new route in mid-February through last week 864 passengers have utilized this one route.

We're also updating the METS fleet. So far this year, we've received two new hybrid buses, one new trolley and one new Compressed Natural Gas van.

City Engineer Pat Keepes has been working with Todd on the city's first ever road hearings. The city has more than five hundred miles of streets, so we thought we'd ask for the public's help identifying those streets in the most need of paving and sealing.

The public meetings provided an opportunity to share information about significant improvements to the Lincoln and Green River Road intersection before it was temporarily closed starting yesterday. The one-point-three million dollar project --- which is totally funded with federal highway money and is being constructed by an Evansville based construction company --- will add left turn lanes, new sidewalks, curbs, gutters and improved traffic signals. The entire project is scheduled for completion this fall.

Good news for those of you who fly out of Evansville Regional Airport. Manager Doug Joest reports that jet ways WILL be installed this year. He also tells me that we can expect more flights coming for the spring and summer travel seasons.

Phillip Hooper is our new head of Metropolitan Development. He and his team is working every day to revitalize core neighborhoods, more effectively utilize federal grants to stimulate private investment in the community, improve lives through human services, preserve historic sites, and redevelop property to create a mooring for the market. The DMD will be listening to neighborhoods in new ways, implementing a comprehensive asset based community development model, forging new partnerships within the local community, and looking for new ways to align investments around strategic capital improvement projects.

Amos Morris has a lot going on at Mesker Park Zoo. He's working on a ten year action plan for the zoo that is looking at the development of exhibits and physical programs for the future growth of the zoo.

He's also working on a refurbishment of the Discovery Center. The plan is to redo the exterior and interior animal spaces as well as repair the outside fascia of the building that has deteriorated. This project will begin this spring and go throughout the summer.

We're going to continue Kley Building Enhancements. We plan to replace the reptile exhibits in the entry room and old rainforest exhibit. These exhibits fell apart last year during cleaning. The zoo has been chipping away at ongoing issues within this structure for the last four years. The goal is to begin work in this area at the end of the season in September 2012 to be opened in April of 2013.

City Controller Russ Lloyd, Jr., reports that Evansville's financial house in order. The city ended 2011 with a general fund balance of \$4.4 million, up from.\$2.2 million from the previous year. The annual financial report presented to the City Council last night noted the east and northwest side annexations that began in 2008 were completed last year.

To ensure the public has a voice in its government, our administration is committed to community outreach and engagement. For instance, we're partnering with HOLA (Hospitality and Outreach for Latin Americans) on how our transit system can be a better service. You heard about our new road hearings; we are continuing the travelling city hall meetings. In fact, two county officeholders have joined us. Auditor Joe Gries and Assessor Bill Fluty are teaming with our city department heads to answer questions from the public. Our next one is tomorrow night at 5:30 p.m. at St. James West United Methodist Church. We've also had discussions with the management team at Eastland Mall. Look for a travelling city hall at the mall some Saturday later this year.

We're on Middays with Mike on 14WFIE regularly and we visit Julie Dolan every month on Local 7 as part of their Lifestyles program. Radio listeners can hear what we are up to every Wednesdays at 8:30 a.m. on AM 1280 WGBF. That's Wednesdays with Winnecke.

We are also reaching out to the public using social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. And the city's website, evansvillegov.org, is about to undergo a major overhaul that will not only update old information and improve the look of the website, but it make it more user friendly to enable the public to find what they are looking for and interact with government leaders.

I'm also working hard to maintain a strong relationship with our City Council. I've done ride-alongs with six of our nine council members so far. We spend some quality time driving around their wards. The idea is for me to learn what their priorities are in the city. I've got quite a list going so far, and I look forward to building these partnerships.

My friends, that represents a great effort by the men and women who work for the city of Evansville in a very short time.

But there are challenges and opportunities that are ahead. In the weeks and months to come, we still have to determine the best, most practical and affordable use for Roberts Stadium. The Stadium Task Force is about to complete its cost analysis of the ideas submitted by the public. I asked the Task Force to complete its work by the end of March. As soon as I receive the report, I will complete my decision-making process before sending a final recommendation to the Parks Board for its consideration.

Determining the size of our downtown convention hotel is currently on our plate. We felt that it was our responsibility to perform our own due diligence. We agreed with our tourism experts who thought it prudent to engage in an independent market analysis to determine just how many hotel rooms are needed. No such study had ever been done. We want to build the right size facility for Evansville with appropriate public incentives.

I'm pleased that Ben Kunkel and his partner Randy Lloyd are assuming the McCurdy Hotel project. I believe their approach to a 96-unit apartment project will be a great asset to downtown.

We'll also face difficult decisions on investing in our water and sewer utility. The long term control plan related to our combined sewers (and mandated by the federal government) will cost millions of dollars over the next two decades.

Recently I've met with INDOT on the future of the Lloyd Expressway and U.S. 41 interchange. The state still insists it best to take the two lights off of the Lloyd and place them on 41 between Virginia and Walnut. That is not an acceptable solution and we've clearly communicated that message to Indianapolis. I'm hopeful that we'll have good news to report relatively soon.

This November, our city and county are at another crossroads in our history. Citizens will have the right to vote on the structure of local government. Our community has debated the issue of unifying city and county government for decades, almost as long as the Interstate 69 project.

Whether you agree or disagree with the concept, the most important thing is that you have the ability to voice your opinion at the ballot box.

Now, it is no secret that I am a supporter of unified local government, but I represent only one vote in this referendum.

After serving in leadership positions in county government, and now city government, it is even clearer to me that the best structure of local government, that is the form that will be the most efficient, accountable and representative for our citizens is to combine city and county government.

More than likely, there is probably something I haven't talked about today. But in the interest of time, let me conclude by reiterating what a privilege it is serve as your mayor. If you can't tell: I am having fun. In fact, I'm having a blast.

I've met many residents of our city --- every one of whom is committed to help improve Evansville. In addition to all of the serious business that we've done in three months,

I've also done some real fun things: I've read to four and five year olds at Evansville ARC, I found a new BFF in West Terrace first grader Bridget Bissell, I'll get to meet Queen Latifah and Harry Belfonte as part of the Diversity Lecture Series, I've shot baskets with some budding young athletes at the Boys and Girls Club, I've read a dozen or so proclamations, Carol and I have served nachos for the Boom Squad in the Ford Center...and in just a bit I will join my predecessors, Jonathan Weinzapfel, Russell Lloyd, Jr., Frank McDonald II and Mike Vandeveer in cutting the city's official birthday cake.

All of this is possible because a pioneer named Hugh McGary liked what he saw when he floated by our riverfront two hundred years ago.

I'm confident that Hugh McGary would be pleased that his vision --- his Evansville --- is doing well and ready for positive change.