

2015 State of the City Address

Oct. 5, 2015 – Great American Ball Park

The Chakras will perform “The National Anthem”

(Show introductory video.)

Mayor Cranley:

Todd Frazier hit a lot of home runs. And after years of hard work at rebuilding our city, with the whole world watching, Cincinnati knocked it out of the park.

This summer, the nation and the world saw what we have come to call home, a renewed historic city with a spectacular riverfront park and a downtown humming with new jobs, new construction and an abundance of energy.

They also saw an Over-the-Rhine that is the most interesting urban space in the country and proof that all neighborhoods can and should be saved.

We convinced a lot of people to give Cincinnati a new look, but most important, we believe in ourselves again.

The story of my life during the past 41 years had mostly been the story of a dying city surrounded by growing suburbs.

Now, as the result of much work and many partnerships, our city is the story of rebirth, growth and opportunity.

The state of our city is improving and we intend to accelerate the pace of progress to ensure that our

city's growth works for every neighborhood and every person.

So, now we take stock of the year behind us and prepare for the year ahead.

There's an old saying:

To be Irish is to know that the world will break your heart in the end.

We had that happen to us this year with unacceptable levels of gun violence, the heroic death of Fire Apparatus Operator **Daryl Gordon** and the murder of one of Cincinnati's finest, Officer **Sonny Kim**.

Let us pause for a moment of silence as we recall our grief and extend a prayer to the families of the fallen.

(Pause for at least 10 seconds)

Just as our individual lives are filled with ups and downs, triumphs and tragedies, so too is the life of a city. And just as in our own lives, Cincinnati emerged stronger from its challenges through hard work, perseverance and the help of good people pulling together for the common good.

Tragedy did not define our year as we saw progress on all of our key markers.

On our goal of creating and retaining Jobs, we completed economic development deals that **created 1,237 jobs and retained another 1,101** in our city.

On our goal of Inclusion, we **created the new Office of Economic Inclusion & Supplier Diversity** at City Hall and **hired Thomas Corey** to lead it. We've already seen some outstanding results.

We've had a **25.6% overall participation rate** by minority-owned businesses.

That's true progress but it's not enough; we vow to do ***EVEN BETTER*** in the year ahead.

Just last week we adopted **the Croson Study**, which will make it easier for us to increase the numbers of contracts going to minority- and women-owned businesses moving forward.

That's due to the hard work of **Bridget Patton** in my office, along with friends like **Janet Reid, Vincent Brown** and **Steve Love**.

We believe that building a truly inclusive economy will not just be good for African-American-, Latino- and women-owned businesses, but for all Cincinnati. A rising tide lifts all boats.

On our goal for infrastructure, we allocated funding the first two years of **a new 6-year, \$91 million program** to repair the city's streets and replace its aging police cruisers, fire trucks, ambulances and salt trucks.

I don't have to tell you that our roads need fixing. Last year, I pledged that we would not continue to kick this can down the road, but admit to the size of the problem and start fixing it.

City Manager Harry Black delivered with a 5-year plan to get our infrastructure back

up to good condition. Instead of averaging 80 road miles paved per year, starting in 2016 it will be an average of 160 miles, along with hundreds of miles in preventative maintenance.

On our goal of making government customer-friendly, we created **the Office of Performance & Data Analytics**; developed our first **Innovation Lab**, a place where city employees solve problems and enhance service integration; and implemented **CincyStat**, where senior staff identify and track performance and service measures on a biweekly basis.

I asked City Council to hire Harry Black exactly because he was committed to performance-based management, and now we have it.

On our goal of getting our financial house in order, we passed a structurally balanced budget for the second year in a row. And we solved the pension crisis, which was facing a liability of \$862 million. Through shared sacrifice — benefit cuts and more city contributions -- we found a solution that eliminates this threat to our city.

Remember, just before we took office, the city's credit was downgraded. Now, after our leadership, we have stabilized our credit and received an upgrade in outlook from Moody's. We *are* getting our financial house in order.

All of this happened in the last year. All of it was a team effort.

I want to thank my colleagues on City Council for their leadership on all of this but I want to highlight a few things in particular.

Vice Mayor David Mann brokered a deal to double Human Services funding in this year's budget, which is used to help the city's most vulnerable citizens.

Councilman Christopher Smitherman, who as chairman of the Law & Public Safety Committee, has kept our attention focused on the unacceptable level of shootings in our city and pushed to get new technology for cops to help them fight crime.

Councilwoman Amy Murray led efforts to ensure progress was made on the Oasis and Wasson Way multi-use trails after years of delays.

Councilman P.G. Sittenfeld expanded hours at our Recreation Centers, so our youth have a place to go to stay out of harm's way and avoid trouble.

Councilman Kevin Flynn led a diligent review of the city's Charter. Issues 23 and 24 -- if passed -- will save taxpayer money by moving the mayoral primary to the same day as the state primary. Vote "Yes" on Issues 23 and 24.

Councilman Charlie Winburn, who as chairman of the Budget & Finance Committee, led the process to get us a structurally balanced budget for the second year in a row. He also did important work to help foster kids find homes in Cincinnati, leading by personal example.

Councilman Wendell Young, who served on my Economic Inclusion Advisory Council and helped us identify the best practices used by other cities so we can boost our minority contracting numbers.

And Councilmembers Chris Seelbach and Yvette Simpson, who worked to make our government more humane by devising a paid parental leave policy for all city workers.

Let's give them all a well-deserved round of applause. *(Applause)*

Just as important, we have new executive leadership that's working hard every day to change the entire culture of City Hall.

City Manager Harry Black is setting out performance agreements for all departments. Nobody is exempt. There are no sacred cows. All are expected to perform.

I want to give special recognition to **Chad Kenney and his amazing team** at our Innovation Lab and CincyStat. There's a lot of rhetoric at the federal level about "reinventing government" with few results, but Chad and his team are truly transforming City Hall to make it more efficient.

I must also thank **Fire Chief Richard Braun**, who brought us safely through a year of tragedy.

The city's legal team is making great strides. **Lawyers like Luke Blocher, Peter Stackpole, Andrew Garth and Marion Haynes** are creating a culture of fair dealing and defending the city's rights.

Mark Manning and **Jessica Powell** are cracking down on slum and blight. **Jennifer Mackenzie** is helping improve our inclusion numbers.

A critical advisor on all aspects of the city, **Solicitor Paula Boggs Muething** is building a team that advises us on how to deliver on our goals — she is a real partner for our city's progress.

Our new Director of Community and Economic Development, **Oscar Bedolla** is running the best-run economic development department I've seen at City Hall.

Willie Carden put the finishing touches on the spectacular Smale Riverfront Park this year just in time for the All-Star Game.

Gerald Checco did a great job at Public Services and will now help solve problems at the Metropolitan Sewer District, helped by public servants like **MaryLynn Lodor** and **Gina Marsh**.

Markeshia Smith is making Public Services more innovative every day, getting help from dedicated and long-term public servants like **Bill Jacoby** and **Jerry Wilkerson**.

I remember on the morning of the All-Star Game, Jerry — a senior leader in the department — was personally cleaning the street because the private contractor bailed and it was our Public Services Department that stepped up to fill the void. **Well done, Jerry**.

Under the leadership of **Harry, Sheila Hill-Christian and John Juech**, we are putting the A-Team on the field and it shows.

Of course, our city's greatness mainly comes from our citizens.

So I want to once again recognize a few special people who helped uplift our city in important ways.

**** This year's "Cincinnatian of the Year" award goes to Bob Castellini.** As CEO of the Reds, Bob convinced the MLB to bring the All-Star Game back to Cincinnati. And what an event it was!

The game brought 200,000 visitors to town and had an economic impact of \$60 million. Even better, MLB helped pay for charity projects in Cincinnati that ranged from creating a Youth Baseball Academy in Roselawn to building a fantastic new Boys & Girls Club in Price Hill to helping U.S. veterans.

And we got to show off our new Cincinnati to the world.

Bob has been a Great Living Cincinnati through his civic and charitable work for decades, but for bringing back the All-Star Game, he has earned the 2015 Cincinnati of the Year Award.

(Welcome to stage, shake hand, give award)

**** This year's "Humanitarian of the Year" award goes to Jim Obergefell.** Jim was the lead plaintiff in Ohio's equal marriage case that went all the way to the U.S Supreme Court.

Jim's heartbreaking story of being denied the right to be listed as the spouse on the death certificate of his late husband, John Arthur, touched us all and helped bring an end to the same-sex marriage bans in Ohio and across the nation once and for all.

Thanks to Jim, the Supreme Court case legalizing gay marriage will forever be associated with Cincinnati. Jim is out of town, but please watch this video.

(Show Jim's video)

Thank you, Jim. You are an inspiration to people everywhere and we're proud to call you a Cincinnati.

**** This year's "Employee of the Year" award goes to Denisha Porter.** Denisha is the Project Director for the "Creating Healthy Communities" grant and the "Health Promotion and Worksite Wellness" program at the Cincinnati Health Department. She is responsible for coordinating health initiatives at schools and worksites.

In addition, Denisha has helped lead the **“Mentoring Meals Monday”** program for Cincinnati Public Schools, as well as working with the City's **“Let's Move Initiative.”** Denisha is also currently coordinating the Health Department's effort in working with **the First Ladies Health Initiative** — working with my wife, Dena – which has a community-wide event scheduled for **Oct. 11**.

Denisha has been noticed by so many people who say she always goes the extra mile. **She even impressed my wife, which is very hard to do. Trust me, I haven't done it yet.** Denisha, congratulations.

(Welcome to stage, shake hand, give award, let family take a photo)

Yes, it really was a great year. Let's make this year even better.

First and foremost, there is far too much gun violence in our city. **This is simply unacceptable.**

This is the city's **top priority** and I promise I will dedicate the time and moral leadership needed until we reduce the shootings.

And we have taken dramatic, concrete steps.

First, we have already added 97 cops to the streets.

Second, we start training 55 new cops at the academy in January.

Third, since elected, we have doubled the “hot spot” walking patrols for known areas of violent crime.

But we will do so much more.

We are **investing in community outreach**, known as CPOP, as well as **Human Relations Commission outreach coordinators**, and working with both **the Hamilton County Probation Department** and **the Partnering Center**, building a comprehensive approach to reducing the shootings.

Most important, we are demanding and supporting committed leadership.

We have had leadership and morale issues, but now we have **Interim Police Chief Eliot Isaac**. Chief Isaac is the best of CPD, has the support of our finest, and is **absolutely committed to the community engagement that’s called for in the Collaborative Agreement**.

And he is surrounded by some of the **most progressive, forward thinking lieutenant colonels and captains** I have ever met.

The City Manager and I will give Chief Isaac **whatever he needs to reduce the shootings and lower violence**.

This will include the following, **all of which I am asking City Council for next week**:

1. Money necessary to **add a civilian criminal analyst** in the Office of Performance & Data Analytics in order **to more fully map crime patterns, identify the worst offenders, and track gang activity**. Our crime fighting **will not be scattershot or sweep oriented**, but targeted and focused —as the evidence points — to known repeat violent offenders.

2. **An additional \$500,000 for more walking patrols and to allow the Gang Unit to conduct undercover operations** to bring down the worst gang violence. Our Gang Unit has some of the best cops, but they need wire taps and long shifts to be able to capture the worst offenders. **Police have said this money will allow them to do just that.**

3. **An additional \$200,000 for the witness protection program that Homicide Detective Jennifer Mitsch has started.** Witness intimidation in unsolved murders is a threat to the rule of law and a stain on our criminal justice system. We must find a way to support and protect witnesses courageous enough to come forward to solve murders. I want to thank Jennifer for stepping up to the plate to deal with this issue.

These 3 steps can make a difference immediately.

Long term, we will need to create better collaborations to get the guns off the street and more effectively lock up the bad guys.

Accordingly, I am asking:

1. Our City Solicitor Paula Boggs Muething and Prosecutor Natalia Harris to **work directly with the U.S. Attorney's Office to bring more federal gun charges for illegal guns.** If our lawyers need to be trained to bring cases in federal court, then let's do it.
Let's get our prosecutors assisting Hamilton County or the U.S. Attorney to get the worst offenders put away for a long time.

2. I am also asking our City Solicitor to **work with Hamilton County Prosecutor Joe Deters to reduce redundancy between our offices so we can free up more prosecutors to bring aggressive actions against landlords who allow criminal activity to occur on their property.** This often victimizes innocent neighbors who can't afford safer options and must live in a war zone.

3. And I will ask our Recreation Department to **find ways to keep our Recreation Centers open for longer hours and to mentor kids**. We will ask them to formalize new relationships with proven mentorship programs like **the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative and the Boys and Girls Clubs**.

Better public safety will improve the quality of life of our neighborhoods and I want this upcoming year to be the “year of the neighborhoods.”

We have **already built a great defensive strategy** for our neighborhoods by ending brownouts, hiring 100 more cops, cleaning up junk lots, and finally making our infrastructure and road paving a priority.

But we **also need a good offense**.

We need the kind of strategy for our neighborhoods that we have successfully used in downtown and Over-the-Rhine.

I asked **3CDC Director Steve Leeper** what he would do if his job was to rebuild our neighborhoods. And he said it always starts with a great public park or civic space. You have to make those beautiful, safe and filled with activities.

That is what he did at Fountain Square and then at Washington Park.

We need a similar strategy for our neighborhoods.

And I am proud to say we have one. It's called **Issue 22**, the parks levy on the ballot this fall.

(Show Park Levy video.)

This small, one-mill property tax will be a game changer for our city and our neighborhoods.

First, more than half the money dedicated to the parks by this Charter amendment will ensure that all existing parks — note I said *existing* parks—will be properly maintained.

The sad fact is that our parks now have \$55 million in deferred maintenance that resulted from years of City Hall not appropriating enough money for them.

This Charter amendment takes annual adequate funding for the parks out of the hands of the politicians and ensures that it will always be there.

But Issue 22 does so much more.

Progressive cities like Portland, Denver and New York have built amazing dedicated off-road bike trails for recreation and environmentally safer commuting.

Issue 22 will build **what I believe will be the most extensive urban dedicated bike infrastructure in the country** because we will be able to use abandoned rail lines to build multi-use trails that will get people across town.

The Wasson Way Trail will start in North Avondale at Xavier University and continue out through Evanston, Hyde Park and Mount Lookout.

The Oasis Trail will provide safe travel from Lunken Airport to downtown.

The Mill Creek Trail will connect Carthage to downtown along the Mill Creek.

And the Ohio River Trail West will eventually connect Sayler Park to downtown.

Collectively, once built, we will have **over 40 miles of dedicated multi-use trails throughout Cincinnati.**

In addition, **the Roselawn Neighborhood Center** will create a programming center and green space in the old Jewish Community Center. There hasn't been a rec center in Roselawn since the JCC closed down, so I think it's time to bring one back.

The Westwood Square project will renovate the area along Epworth and Harrison avenues to create a community space for holding more outdoor neighborhood events.

And these are just some of the projects we have planned.

Make no mistake: **This will be transformational for our neighborhoods and provide benefits for future generations.** We will build and activate the common spaces that bring us together.

And just last week, we were offered \$8 million upfront -- with more money to come -- from selling the remaining Blue Ash Airport land. I am asking City Council to work with me to ensure that this time, **the Blue Ash Airport money is set aside permanently in an endowment for neighborhoods.**

We should use this money to activate our neighborhood parks and civic spaces the way

the city and 3CDC have done in downtown and Over-the-Rhine.

Issue 22 is about our neighborhoods and bringing the city together for the common good. Please vote "Yes."

So, our top 2 priorities this year are safety and stronger neighborhoods.

But we will also tackle issues that define our character as well.

In the shadow of the new GE building, we need to worry about those who live in the shadows.

We have a lot to be proud of -- **but we must be ashamed at our childhood poverty rate.** Our great civic renewal will not be complete without lifting up those who do not choose the dire and desperate circumstances in which they live.

During the past year, we launched my "Hand Up Initiative" which invests in best-of-class job training and job readiness programs like **Cincinnati Works, the Urban League, SOAR and Cincinnati Cooks.** It is working and is on pace to reduce poverty by 5% over 4 years.

That is great, but it's not good enough.

Inspired by that example, along with the recent State of Black Cincinnati report issued by the Urban League, **a group of business executives, civic leaders, clergy, and civil rights leaders have come together to establish a Task Force to Reduce Child Poverty in Cincinnati.**

Our goals include **lifting 10,000 children out of poverty within 5 years**. In addition, we will help 5,000 unemployed or underemployed adults get into jobs with living wages.

This effort will be facilitated by the United Way and include volunteers from all walks of life.

Leadership will include **Michael Fisher, Tom Williams, Donna Jones Baker, O'Dell Owens, Sister Sally Duffy, Bishop Michael Dantley, Hamilton County Commissioner Todd Portune, Vice Mayor David Mann, and myself**.

Our kick-off meeting will be a poverty summit open to the public, called for by **Todd Portune**.

Our Task Force **will make actionable recommendations by June 30, 2016**.

We all have to do our part as citizens to close unacceptable disparities of health and income in our city.

I am asking each of you to find a way to contribute to this effort.

There is no better example of volunteerism than **the First Ladies Health Initiative**, co-chaired by New Jerusalem Baptist Church First Lady **Barbara Lynch** and my wife, the first lady of Cincinnati, **Dena Cranley**.

Please watch this video which explains the Initiative.

(Show FLHI video.)

This Sunday, 6 days from now, on Oct. 11, 18 churches will have in-church screenings for chronic illnesses like asthma, lung disease, diabetes, blood pressure, HIV, vision problems, behavioral health issues, and more.

Doctors rarely make house calls anymore, except for this Sunday when they come to 18 different churches in the neighborhoods. The doctors are coming to you.

This important voluntary initiative has inspired **5 hospitals**, and **over 30 community partners** to volunteer thousands of hours to make our city healthier. There are **over 800 volunteers** ready to serve our city this Sunday.

I am so proud of you Dena, and I love you.

And we will help make Cincinnati the most immigrant friendly city in the country.

My Immigration Task Force will issue its recommendations for how to make Cincinnati more welcoming to newcomers on **Oct. 28**.

First, I want to thank **Tom Fernandez and Raj Chundur** for co-chairing the Task Force and for the hundreds of volunteers who worked on the report.

I am also proud to say that under **Jill Meyer's leadership**, the Chamber will be taking on the role implementing the recommendations with our ongoing help.

More details will come soon, but I also want to send a special thanks to **UC President Santa Ono and Daniel Rajaiah** in my office for their hard work.

So this year will make our city safer, cleaner, and committed to combating poverty.

And let's have fun while we do it. Yes, you guessed it: I'm referring to my Commissioner of Fun **Frank Wood**.

Frank got us all to throw tomatoes at each other during La Tomatina in Price Hill. Now, Frank's tenure as Commissioner of Fun will be extended so he can blow up a pumpkin.

That's right: Frank is organizing an event on **Nov. 1**. We will join together to watch as he explodes **a 1,500-pound pumpkin**.

Why? Because it feels like the right thing to do on the day after Halloween!

As we prepare for the year ahead, we have a lot of work to do. But the work ahead is no harder than the work behind us.

In fact, it was by facing the most immediate problems — pension, policing, brownouts, credit rating, balanced budget — that we are now freed up to build the beloved community we dream about.

A dream of The Queen City of Parks connected by bike trails, good public roads and infrastructure that help industry thrive, a culture that welcomes the talents of all new Cincinnatians, a city that gives hope to the less fortunate, a city without gun violence, a city that works for every neighborhood and for every citizen.

I believe we can do all these things this year because I marvel at what we came through together this past year.

If there was any day that encapsulated **the heights of joy and depths of sorrow**, it was June 26. On that day, **we buried Sonny Kim and the Supreme Court legalized gay marriage**.

I participated in the sad funeral, eulogized Sonny's service, watched the burial in torrential rain, and then rushed downtown to marry 5 couples. Later that evening, while driving my son home, we witnessed 2 massive rainbows in the sky as we traveled West to East, right as we crossed Vine Street.

When we got home, I put a message on Facebook that some of you may have seen but I will share it again because it so perfectly sums up our year of ups and downs. This is what I wrote that night:

24 hours of trading tears of sadness for tears of joy. We laid Officer Sonny Kim to rest this morning for paying the ultimate sacrifice for our city. Late this afternoon I was given the honor to officiate the weddings of 5 couples on Fountain Square whose marriages were illegal when we woke up this morning.

20,000 Cincinnatians wearing blue stood respectfully over a 12-mile stretch of Montgomery Road as 3 sons, 2 parents and 1 widow drove by on the way to the cemetery. 5 couples of 10 people finally got recognition for what was already true: They loved each other. Genuine rejoice on Fountain Square was leadened by memories of the grave site in a downpour.

100 police officers standing at attention over the casket weeping as the police dispatcher makes the symbolic final roll call: "Be advised, Police Officer Sonny Kim is not responding," she said. "This is the final call for Officer Sonny Kim."

Exhausted physically and emotionally, on the drive home my 6-year-old son, Joseph, pointed to not one but two massive rainbows in the sky. One for Officer Kim and one for Love, I believe. Hope! A day in the life of our city.

They say there is no better catharsis than to laugh through our tears and we had a few this year. We had recently buried Sonny and Daryl when our own **Todd Frazier** lit up the night with a display that was just what we needed and reminded us of what we are capable of.

Because that night was not just a victory for Todd, but for our whole city.

Todd stepped up to a plate after years of work by the Community Organizing Committee headed by **Melanie Chavez, Delores Hargrove Young, Sharry Addison and Lauren Bosse.**

They – along with thousands of volunteers and the Police, Fire and Public Services departments -- made this event exceed all of our expectations.

Because that night was a culmination of years of effort to restore our riverfront parks and stadiums;

years of hard work to rejuvenate our downtown that spanned many decades, many mayors, many City Councils, enormous private sector investment and volunteer pride.

Todd's home runs came after we were advised the Home Run Derby would be not only rained out but hailed out — at 2:30 we were told to plan for cancellation — but in fact, weather radar will show that the entire Midwest was drenched that night except for us.

Why? Because after burying Sonny Kim, **we needed a few home runs.**

We all know sadness, death and tragedy, so it was a sweet victory when our guy stood on all of our shoulders and knocked it out of the park. He stood on John Arthur's shoulders, Daryl Gordon's shoulders and Sonny Kim's shoulders, too.

And we want to hit more home runs as a city. And those magical home runs always come after hard work. And the harder we work as a city, the more home runs we will hit.

So let's step up to the plate to fight gun violence.

And let us step up to the plate for our neighborhoods and parks, investing in the green spaces and public commons that bring us together.

And let's step up to the plate to reduce child poverty. *We* may not save every child, but the children we do help will grow up to help the ones we missed.

We won't always hit a home run, but together, I know we will at least get on base. And every now and then, we will hit a few out of the park.

I know we will because we did it this year. We emerged from tragedy this year stronger than before. With your help, we will do it again.

Because we now know that -- at the end of our tears -- lies a rainbow.
A rainbow for Cincinnati.

(Pause)

May God bless you and may God bless Cincinnati. Thank you!
