

Celebrating our history, innovating our future: **Making Motion | Moving People**

Introduction

It was just over three years ago that I stood in this building and was sworn in as the thirty-seventh Mayor of the City of Elkhart. As I raised my right hand and took the oath of office, I embarked on a journey I could have never predicted.

In preparation for tonight's speech, I have reflected on both the triumphs and challenges our community has faced during this time. There have been good days and there have been difficult days, but it remains one of the great honors of my life to be able to lead Elkhart through these transformational times.

Until becoming Mayor, I did not fully grasp the important role our great City plays in the state's overall economy. Our business climate matters not only to you and me, but to our neighbors, Hoosiers, and consumers nationwide. In fact, Elkhart's business community contributes one out of every 45 jobs in the State of Indiana.

In continuing to be a strong participant in our state's economy, it is critical that we plan for a more vibrant future where we will attract additional people who want to live here. With this, we must embrace the new principles required for economic progress – including industrial growth, infrastructure development, entrepreneurship and innovation, place making – including parks, arts, and culture – talent attraction, and public safety.

To accomplish this requires unprecedented collaboration between Elkhart's civic and business leaders. Together over the past year, we have embarked on a 2040 Vision: Making Motion | Moving People. Tonight, I will outline proactive steps my administration has already taken to facilitate the growth of our community through motion making and place making, as well as work still to be done.

MOTIONMAKING

Industrial Growth • Infrastructure Development • Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Industrial Growth

Working proactively to increase economic resiliency and develop a clear growth plan

Today, 16 of Elkhart's 18 base industries are related to RV manufacturing and account for approximately 34 percent of the City's employment. This industry cluster has served our community well and should be both celebrated and supported. Still, we must look for ways to diversify and reduce our vulnerability to fluctuations in the economy.



Recognizing this, I assembled a team of professionals to produce an economic growth case study of an established industrial area within the City. It was important to dig deeper to understand and quantify what many local officials and residents know to be anecdotally true. While the economy is still strong, I felt an obligation to work proactively to increase economic stability.

This case study has laid the foundation for what will become the City of Elkhart's first ever economic growth plan. Never before has the City clearly defined its economic growth goals and created a roadmap for how to achieve them.

The first phase of this plan identifies three growth objectives necessary to ensure Elkhart's future sustainability: (1) economic diversification, (2) talent attraction and retention, and (3) land use and infrastructure. By focusing on these areas, we intend to remove constraints on future economic development.

The River District Revitalization Plan is an excellent example of a project designed to address several of these challenges through the creation of an urban, walkable environment where people can live, work, and play, all in one neighborhood.

Yet this year, the Beacon Health and Aquatics Center will open, hundreds of new residents will have found a home in the Flaherty & Collins apartment development, and Great Lakes Capital will have broken ground on the new Martin's Supermarket and residential development. A modernized streetscape will also be complete along Jackson Boulevard, Elkhart Avenue, Junior Achievement Drive, and Lexington Avenue.

This has been an ambitious undertaking, but we are already seeing tangible results. For every public dollar invested by the City, we have been able to leverage an additional \$2.45 in private investment. Through 2022, we estimate these combined investments will support over 1,700 jobs and result in nearly \$245 million in total economic impact. Our community is clearly open for business, and people are excited to invest in Elkhart's bright future.

As this progress continues, our next step is to develop a process by which transformational projects such as this can continue to advance throughout the City. The success of this downtown revitalization has continued a rich history of public-private partnerships that have made Elkhart what it is today. This very theatre is an example of a renaissance facilitated through the cooperation of the public and private sectors.

In the coming weeks, I will be proposing that we institutionalize this practice of public-private collaboration and establish a defined system for identifying growth opportunities and turning those opportunities into actions.

This arrangement will establish a consistent format that aligns private sector leaders and City staff in pursuit of a shared vision. This group will build consensus around priority projects and oversee their successful completion, regardless of changing political leadership. I believe this is crucial to cultivating a competitive business climate in Elkhart. I look forward to hosting additional work sessions to advance this initiative and expect to have this system in place before the end of my administration's term.



Inside Indiana Business calls Elkhart “a region on the move”

When Indiana’s only statewide business television program came to Elkhart in July 2018, there was no shortage of accolades. This past year saw nearly \$100 million in commercial and industrial investment, with the number of new construction and improvement projects reaching 305. The one-hour broadcast focused on the state of business and the economy in Elkhart and Michiana and featured interviews with top business, community and academic leaders.

This was our moment to tell the story of how Elkhart is working to reinvent itself through diversification of our economy and the creation of a cultural destination. It also provided a platform to promote opportunities for new real estate and business development to potential investors statewide.

Elkhart: home of the world’s largest RV manufacturer

Elkhart has long been recognized throughout Indiana and across the United States as an entrepreneurial hub, particularly as a powerhouse in RV manufacturing. In early 2018, Elkhart’s Thor Industries earned a spot on the Fortune 500 List for the first time in company history. Later in the year, they announced an agreement to acquire the German RV manufacturer Erwin Hymer Group. With this acquisition, Thor Industries has now become the largest RV manufacturer in the world.

In addition to being leaders in the industry, President and CEO Bob Martin and his dedicated team at Thor are also leaders in our community. Their generous sponsorship of the Elkhart Riverwalk Grand Prix is just one example of their commitment to a more vibrant City. With their assistance, Elkhart’s Grand Prix quickly became one of the top three go-kart races in the nation. Their involvement demonstrates an understanding of how our City’s quality of place can impact their ability to attract and retain talented employees. Elkhart is proud to be the world headquarters of Thor Industries.

Infrastructure Development

Roadway conditions improve citywide: facilitating economic development through transportation infrastructure

In my first year as Mayor, the City’s Engineering Department developed Elkhart’s first Pavement Asset Management Plan. To create the plan, every City street had to be driven and the roadway condition had to be assessed. Since the implementation of this plan, crews have resurfaced nearly all of the City’s failed pavement, significantly reduced the number of lane-miles in poor condition, and significantly increased the number of lane-miles in excellent condition.

Street Department dedicates more resources to paving than ever before

These results continued in 2018 with the Elkhart Street Department dedicating more resources to



paving than ever before. By the end of the paving season, they had completed over 50 unique paving projects.

More than 30 percent of this work was concentrated in the area bounded by Indiana Avenue, South Main Street, Hively and Benham avenues. A total of 18 residential roads in this area saw repaved streets, sidewalk repairs, and upgraded curb ramps. The Street Department also completed eight paving projects on behalf of various other City departments, which saved the City money by completing the work in-house.

This great work is in addition to over \$30,000 that was used to repair over 900 potholes throughout the City.

Railroad overpass coming to Hively Avenue

In 2018, the City applied for a state grant to facilitate construction of a railroad overpass at Hively Avenue. I knew the application process was going to be competitive, but I was willing to put our Engineering Department up against any other in the state.

In addition to our stellar team, we were able to utilize a preliminary recommendation of the economic growth case study – completed under my administration – to demonstrate to State officials the positive local impact of this project. The study had identified a grade separation at Hively Avenue as a way to create more efficient and direct connection between the City's two major industrial clusters, linking businesses and people with customers and employment opportunities.

The application also had the support of the Michiana Area Council of Governments, Congresswoman Jackie Walorski, members of the Elkhart County legislative delegation, the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce, and MORryde International.

In December, we were notified that we had been selected to receive nearly \$16 million from the Indiana Department of Transportation's (INDOT) Local Trax Program. Once completed, the Hively Avenue Overpass project will improve safety, reduce travel times, and provide for additional economic development opportunities.

Improved safety and navigation leads to more modernized Elkhart Municipal Airport

The Elkhart Municipal Airport is an asset, not just locally, but also on a statewide and national level. To Elkhart, it is the front door for people considering the City as a place where they want to invest. To the State of Indiana, it is one of their busiest general aviation airports, and serves as an economic engine in a city whose base industries alone accounted for \$14.6 billion in economic output in 2017 and generated nearly \$900 million in state sales and income tax revenue.

In 2018, our airport received national recognition after being identified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as playing an important part in our nation's air transportation system. As a result of this designation, we received an approximately \$800,000 grant from the FAA aimed at enhancing safety and navigation for corporate clients and other individuals utilizing the Elkhart Municipal Airport. In December, we completed the installation of airfield guidance signs as well as



reconstruction of taxiway lighting. The transition to LED lighting will benefit local taxpayers by reducing energy consumption and costs.

Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Service is Beautiful

In 2018, Joseph Feathers – a technician with the City’s Information Technology Department – became the first City of Elkhart employee to be recognized by SeamlessGov for increasing competencies in technology. Joseph was recognized as an innovator in local government with the Service is Beautiful Award.

Joseph has been instrumental in helping the City to operate more efficiently by beginning the transition to paperless and reducing associated expenses. One example of this increased efficiency has occurred in the Building Department. Previously, our building inspectors and code enforcement officers completed paper logs for every inspection. Today, they are able to digitally complete the log in the field, attach any necessary images or other documentation, and submit that information immediately to the office staff. This has reduced both the opportunity for human error as well as the time spent on this particular task. The ability for office staff to access information in real time has also improved customer service and allowed development projects to proceed more quickly.

Online permitting

In addition, residents and contractors looking to obtain a permit from the Building Department can now submit HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and general building permit applications electronically via the City website. This provides the flexibility of submitting an application anytime, day or night, and is intended to facilitate home improvements and other development more efficiently citywide.

These government efficiency efforts will continue this year as we transition to a new payroll system, which will allow employees to view paystubs electronically. This will greatly reduce printing costs in the Controller’s Office and give employees greater access to their personnel information.

Elkhart’s wastewater treatment plant receives statewide recognition

This past summer, the City of Elkhart wastewater treatment plant received one of the most prestigious environmental awards in the state – the Indiana Water Environment Association’s (IWEA) Collection Systems Large Facility Award. This award recognizes facilities making substantial improvements to the collection system profession.

The City of Elkhart collection system consists of both separate and combined sewers, which carry both sewage and storm water in the same pipe. During periods of heavy rain, these combined sewers can overflow into local bodies of water such as Christiana Creek, the Elkhart River and the St. Joseph River. In receiving this award, the City was recognized for achieving and surpassing regulatory requirements to reduce overflows ahead of schedule while also working proactively to



anticipate future regulatory requirements and develop plans for compliance.

I am proud to see our Public Works and Utilities team leading the way in this important public safety and quality of life issue. What makes this accomplishment even more impressive is that we have been able to do so with a relatively small staff and low residential sewer rate.

One of the unique features that helped Elkhart stand out amongst other Hoosier communities was our recent development of a public notification system aimed at alerting residents to combined sewer overflows (CSO). This provides an additional tool to notify the public that caution should be taken when choosing to engage in recreational activity in local rivers and creeks during and after a rainfall or snowmelt event.

Elkhart is the first Great Lakes Basin community to provide this important information through a very simple and user-friendly method – a map. Visitors to the City’s website can check the status of Elkhart’s 29 discharge points by scrolling to the bottom of the page and locating the CSO Overflow symbol.

Elkhart’s position at the confluence of two rivers has been paramount in our ongoing efforts to facilitate economic development through quality of place initiatives. As we aim to encourage increased utilization of these natural resources, this reporting mechanism will become even more significant.

Continuing Elkhart’s rich history of entrepreneurship

For decades, entrepreneurship has been synonymous with Elkhart.

One of the first actions of my administration was to initiate a partnership with the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce to create Launch Elkhart. Through a combination of a large co-working area, individual offices and shared conference space, Launch Elkhart recognizes the unique needs of start-up businesses and offers them the services they need to be successful.

After starting Launch Elkhart, it became obvious that we could do more to promote entrepreneurialism for our youth. In 2017, I called for a plan to support the creation of an Elkhart Innovation Center for Youth. The intent was to provide a space where local students are empowered to discover their potential and turn their ideas today into the businesses of tomorrow.

Through this process, we determined the Junior Achievement Model was well aligned with what we were trying to accomplish. Today, Elkhart Community School students must travel to Fort Wayne to participate in such programming. The Innovation Center will provide the opportunity for Junior Achievement programming, including a BizTown and Finance Park, to be housed and operated right here in Elkhart.

If you are not familiar with these programs, the BizTown operates like a mini-city where students experience how the “real world” works. Each citizen has a job for the day, participates in business and town meetings, manages their personal checking account and debit card, purchases retail items to take home, and so on. This is typically programmed for fifth and sixth graders.



High school students will participate in the Finance Park, which is a program that introduces students to personal financial planning and career exploration.

While still under refinement by the Junior Achievement Administration, the facility is tentatively planned to open in the fall of 2020. The approximately 8,000 square foot space will be housed inside the current ETHOS Science Center, complementing the work they are already doing to engage children and adults with science and technology.

These programs are intended to feed directly into adult-focused programs like SCORE and Launch Elkhart.

PLACEMAKING

Parks, Arts & Culture • Talent Attraction • Public Safety

Parks, Arts & Culture

AmeriCorps team comes to Elkhart

As we work to reinforce our entrepreneurial history and prepare the next generation of local innovators, we must also recognize the importance of placemaking to talent attraction and retention.

In 2018, one of Elkhart's unique natural assets – the Environmental Center – got a sprucing up courtesy of an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) team. The team of young adults was part of a federal program that travels throughout the country supporting agencies through direct service. Members develop leadership skills and strengthen communities by completing service projects and gaining life experience.

The eight member team stayed and worked in the community from July to September, committing up to 45 service hours per week. Their work primarily focused on the 66-acres that make up the Environmental Center, completing projects such as invasive species removal, trail renovation and construction, and overall beautification efforts. During their stay, the team also worked with various non-profits throughout Elkhart County. This was a great way to encourage the community to join in and enhance one of our great community assets at no additional cost to the Elkhart taxpayers. In total, 550 volunteers contributed over 51,000 hours to the Environmental Center in 2018.

Creating a vibrant civic gathering place in the heart of downtown Elkhart

In August, the Elkhart Redevelopment Commission selected a design team for a placemaking project on the Civic Plaza and Central Park in downtown Elkhart. Rundell Ernstberger Associates (REA) began working with local stakeholders to develop a design for the space that facilitates better



utilization – both daily and during events – and creates a vibrant civic gathering place.

This conversation was prompted in part by the rapidly growing number of downtown events. It brings me great pride to say that Elkhart is home to a number of events that create a national draw. This includes the world-renowned Jazz Festival, Bike Night, the Firefighter Combat Challenge, the Thor Industries Grand Prix, in addition to Comic Con.

Events such as this result in significant revenue increases for hotels as well as downtown merchants. Some downtown restaurants have reported an increase of approximately 200 percent in business during large events. The Civic Plaza and Central Park currently function adequately for these gatherings, but we wanted to explore how we could make the space more appealing for daily social engagement.

The first thing we did was seek public input. In order to create this vibrant destination, it must reflect the character of the community, and it was critical that you all be involved in the process. Approximately 250 interested members of the community have participated in public input sessions, online surveys, and various stakeholder meetings. That feedback has been incorporated into a three-part project that is anticipated to break ground yet this year.

Phase One will include the most popular features identified through public input, primarily focusing on enhancements to the public green space. This will include a permanent stage, a public restroom facility, a shaded seating area, and improvements to Waterfall Drive. The improvements to Waterfall Drive will allow for the best of both worlds, making the area more convenient for hosting downtown events while allowing traffic flow to continue when events are not taking place. By focusing temporary street closures on Waterfall Drive, these enhancements will reduce the need to close Main Street and provide increased access to businesses along this major corridor.

Parks and cultural assets: the key to aligning quality of place and economic development

In 2018, we welcomed a new superintendent at the Elkhart Parks and Recreation Department. In this role, Randy Norton is responsible for planning and managing activities at the City's 36 parks. This is no small feat, particularly given the growing link between park amenities and economic development.

In today's competitive market, the amenities available through well-coordinated and well-maintained parks are increasingly linked to economic vitality and the ability to attract and retain top talent. With the right programming, parks can also be neighborhood stabilizers, increasing adjacent property values and providing families free and inclusive gathering places.

Under Randy's leadership, the City of Elkhart is developing an aggressive vision for our park system that focuses on safety and a diversified portfolio of programs and activities. It will also focus on beautification, working more closely with the Elkhart Buildings and Grounds Department, which maintains over 250 acres of park property.

Talent Attraction

Elkhart's River District Implementation Plan receives international merit award for planning



Just eight months after the City broke ground on the River District Streetscape Project, we were already receiving international recognition. In November, the River District Implementation Plan received a Merit Award for Planning by the International Downtown Association (IDA), a world leader and champion for vital and livable urban centers.

Their annual Downtown Achievement Awards recognize outstanding improvements to downtown by the work of dedicated individuals around the globe. Elkhart was one of only six communities in the U.S. to receive this award, joining the ranks of much larger cities including Cedar Rapids, Dallas, and Des Moines. Dave Weaver attended the IDA award presentation in San Antonio and accepted the award on behalf of his fellow River District Implementation Team members, which includes both public and private individuals.

Public safety

In 2018, there was no greater example of the dedication of our public safety professionals than during the historic February flood. Approximately 800 structures were directly impacted and 315 individuals were rescued by Elkhart first responders. Despite these numbers, we had zero civilian casualties and zero civilian injuries reported.

The City was in emergency operations mode twenty-four hours a day for approximately six days. In those moments, the talent, dedication, and professionalism of our City employees was unparalleled. When the water finally receded, the event was not over, and the long-term recovery process was only beginning. Nearly every City department played a role in those response and recovery efforts. Today, we continue to feel the aftermath of the flood, but thankfully, we did not lose anything that cannot be replaced.

Elkhart Police Department focuses on crime reduction

Crime reduction continues to be the number one goal of the Elkhart Police Department (EPD). In 2018, we saw slight decreases in some crime categories and slight increases in others. Since implementing my first budget as Mayor, which included significant increases in police personnel and resources, we have experienced an approximately 17 percent overall reduction in major crime categories.

While these numbers are encouraging, we must continue to make crime reduction a priority through enforcement, education, and community involvement. One of the greatest tools any department has at their disposal to solve and prevent crime is community relations. This reality was the ultimate determining factor in my decision to appoint Chris Snyder as the new Chief of the Elkhart Police Department in January.

In his 21 years with the department, Chief Snyder has experienced many aspects of police service, but his roots are in neighborhood-oriented policing. As the community relations officer and later the public information officer, Chief Snyder developed a reputation as an honest, transparent individual, who always has the community's best interest at heart.

That is why I was not surprised when he approached me with his first departmental change – the implementation of a new Community Support Division. This division is aimed at facilitating more frequent and improved interaction with the community. It combines officers who are specifically



trained in fundamental criminal and quality of life issues, under the direction of a singular captain. This captain will oversee units such as Community Policing, Animal Control, Traffic, and School Resource Officers.

With the creation of this division, you can expect to see a continued police presence at neighborhood association meetings, City sponsored events, and other community gatherings. You can also expect to see additional focus on neighborhood canvas walks, where officers are out of their cars getting to know our residents and learning more about what public safety means to them. This focus on relationship building will undoubtedly make our department and our community stronger.

Reaffirming the credibility of the Elkhart Police Department

In an effort to further enhance the relationship between the public and our local law enforcement professionals, you can expect to see additional changes in 2019. Part of being a public servant and effective leader means not accepting the status quo and being open to making improvements that the community desires and deserves.

When the police department's integrity came into question in 2018, I knew we had to act in order to reaffirm the credibility of the department and reinforce public trust. We enlisted former U.S. attorney and assistant attorney general Deborah J. Daniels to conduct an independent third-party assessment of the systems, policies, and practices of the EPD. Through this assessment, we are working to empower positive change and develop collective solutions that we can all be proud of – including EPD personnel, elected officials, and members of the community.

When the assessment is completed later this year, we will be able to share with the community the areas where we excel as well as the areas where we can and will do better. I feel optimistic knowing that this will be a tool we can provide for the next administration to carry on. Similar to our economic growth plan, this is about analyzing best practices and developing a roadmap that can serve as a guide for future City leadership.

Elkhart Fire Department improves incident turnout times and response times

The Elkhart Fire Department (EFD) maintains one of the highest Public Protection Classifications awarded to any Indiana city or town and continues to make improvements in both turnout and response times.

In my first budget as Mayor, I allocated funding to provide a new, automated dispatch system at all seven of the City's fire stations. This new technology provides clear and quick information when every moment counts.

In 2018, data shows that our fire crews are leaving the station an average of 25 to 30 seconds faster than they did prior to having the automated system. Once the crews leave the station, the National Fire Protection Association recommends that all departments strive to have their first unit arrive on scene in less than four minutes, 90 percent of the time. Prior to the implementation of the automated dispatch system, the EFD was only meeting that goal 72 percent of the time. Today, with the new system and updated response procedures, on average, we are now hitting that goal, 87 percent of time.

New fire equipment has local, regional benefits



In 2018, the Elkhart Fire Department purchased a new Hazardous Material Response Unit. Elkhart County assisted financially in the purchase, providing over 10 percent of the cost. This is an extremely important piece of equipment in our community given the strong manufacturing presence. This unit also serves four counties across northeast Indiana and southern Michigan.

Major upgrades coming to Elkhart's emergency communications platform

In 2018, the City of Elkhart 911 Communications Center saw a reduction in total call volume. While the number of calls requiring a police response decreased, fire and emergency medical calls rose slightly.

Heading into 2019, the Center is gearing up for a major upgrade to our communications platform, which will take two years to complete. The new system will allow all of public safety, including the Elkhart County Public Safety Communications Center, to communicate on a single platform without the need for patching or switching radios in the moments that matter. Across county lines and across the State of Indiana, officers will have the ability to always keep a lifeline to dispatch.

Once finalized, the State's Integrated Public Safety Commission will cover all maintenance and upgrades to the system through 2036. This aligns the City with an 18-year investment in which the technology will continually be upgraded at no cost to the City.

Modernizing public safety services through a combined facility

When discussions first began regarding a public safety complex, the intent was to build a new state of the art facility that would combine police, fire, 911 communications and emergency support services all under one roof. This combined facility would ensure a higher level of public protection through the sharing of technology, resources, information, and expertise.

This process has taken longer than anticipated but has been necessary in order to ensure the right decisions are being made. This complex will be an important part of the City's public safety operations for decades, and it is critical that we select the best design in the best location, while ensuring the taxpayers are getting the best bang for their buck.

Several sites continue to be analyzed in order to ensure our public safety departments can continue to deliver the highest level of service to our community. I am hopeful that we can make a final site selection and get this project in motion before the end of 2019. This will be an important milestone in our ongoing efforts to enhance public safety and increase government efficiency.

Conclusion

Not slowing down

With 288 days left in office, my administration is not slowing down. We will continue to give 200 percent every day until it is time to pass the baton. As the year ends, I look forward to working with the next mayor selected to lead this community. My administration is committed to a seamless transition and will work from now until then to lay a solid foundation for the next person to carry on.



With the right plans and systems in place, we are creating an energy that cannot be destroyed, regardless of leadership changes, and can be transferred in perpetuity for the betterment of this community. Elkhart's positive momentum is not slowing down, and neither are we.

Thank You

None of the positive achievements highlighted tonight would have been possible without the constructive feedback of the community and the tireless work of my fellow City employees.

My fondest memories as Mayor revolve around the people who I have met and worked alongside to make Elkhart a city on the move. Our greatest achievements have not been born out of partisan victories, but rather a willingness to put politics aside and do what is right for Elkhart. To everyone who has been a sounding board and has rolled up their sleeves to support our administration, thank you.

Thank you all for being here this evening and for this incredible and rewarding opportunity to be your Mayor. May the strengths and challenges of Elkhart's past continue to guide us towards a more prosperous future that builds upon our powerful economic engine and creates unique and abundant opportunities for all.

