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# CITY OF NEW BRITAIN

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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## **The City of New Britain is Energized and the State of Our City is Strong**

As is custom here in the City of New Britain for the first Common Council meeting in March, I recently presented my State of the City Address surrounded by the distinguished members of the Common Council, elected officials, department leaders, city employees, and my fellow residents of New Britain. This month's column provides an abridged version of that address for those who may have missed it.

Over the past decade we have been working together to bring New Britain back and to build the bright future for New Britain that we all deserve. Through thoughtful and caring leadership we have accomplished what, not that long ago, seemed nearly un-imaginable. I am proud to report that the City of New Britain is energized and the state of our City is strong.

Together we have been building, both figuratively and literally, a better New Britain. Our common-sense, non-partisan approach has allowed us to bridge the political divide, to seek compromise, and embrace a wide spectrum of viewpoints – to better serve all of our residents. By working with elected officials from both sides of the aisle, both locally and statewide, we have been able to successfully craft and implement sound, responsible policies that benefit every resident in our great community.

Anywhere you go in our City you can see cranes, trucks, or construction sites; the energetic signs of improvements to our buildings and the quiet hum of new possibilities. But these things don't just magically happen, we have to make them happen. We remain committed to expanding workforce development, building a diverse workforce that reflects the community and fills the needs of the industries found here – and while there is still plenty of work to be done in that area, I am happy to report that the City's unemployment rate has gone from 15.9% during the height of the pandemic (June 2020) to just 3.9% in January of this year.

The Public Works Department continues to advance massive public improvements to the City's infrastructure through projects like our Complete Streets Roadmap, NB FLUSH (a \$90 million investment in repairing and replacing the City's 100- year-old storm water and sewer infrastructure), and the City's new \$20 million Public Works Yard – directly supporting ground up development that is transforming our City block by block. We're doing it because we care.

Here in New Britain we care. We care about the quality of life for all of our residents. We remain committed to good government, continued public improvements, better and more accountable public safety, and to advancing opportunity and access to everyone, no matter your zip code, your income, or your home ownership status.

We are expanding our investment in our parks so that we can continue providing state of the art recreational spaces for everyone. This includes the \$10.5 million overhaul of Osgood Park, which will turn the entire area into an outdoor recreation destination for the North End of town. We have also begun the dredging of the pond at Stanley Quarter Park, a long overdue project that will restore that pond into the gem that so many of us remember.

The energy of work being done for the New Britain Recovers initiative has allowed us to fight back against social stigmas and serve some of our City's most vulnerable and often overlooked residents. By bringing together the City's Opioid Task Force, Building Hope Together's taskforce on Homelessness, and the Local Prevention Council under one umbrella, the City is able to provide a one-stop-shop that can provide a holistic service approach that helps improve the lives of our fellow residents who struggle with a variety of interconnected issues.

We have cared about good government, and made City Hall more transparent, accessible, and accountable to the public. My office door is always open, and I've continued holding Mayor's Office hours at various locations throughout the community to give more residents the chance to express their concerns and bring new ideas to the table. No administration has been more transparent, more accountable and more accessible than ours.

Together we are leading New Britain into the 21st century and making it a model of success for other municipalities to follow. We are energized, we are strong, and we are growing.

You have often heard me say that financial stability is a journey not a destination. I remain proud of the fact that we have turned a \$30 million operating deficit into a \$24 million surplus, bringing new found stability and fiscal responsibility back after decades of mismanagement.

It is up to us as leaders to confront the hard problems and find solutions that will lead to successes. If history is any barometer, I know that together, we can meet these challenges head on and come out better for it. It wasn't very long ago that during this very same address I called out the elephant in the room; the glaring deficiencies within our public school system. I made it clear then and there that I would not support the adults failing our students any longer.

My speech then prompted some difficult conversations, leading to desperately needed changes. Today, I am proud to say the City has a renewed relationship with the School District

and the incessant calls for more communication and accountability, increased academic performance, and a return to the basics are being answered.

Another pressing challenge that presents us an opportunity is this years' property revaluation process. This state mandated process occurred during a time of high inflation, high demand, low inventory, and unfavorable interest rates. As a result, many residents received notice that their property values had significantly increased, which led to many questions about their tax bills. While the City can't step in and stop the nationwide market trends and economic conditions that led to an increase in values, we can address the mill rate to minimize the financial impact on our taxpayers.

I want to be very clear here, the City can, must, and will, re-evaluate the current mill rate. I stand with the taxpayers of this great City and when I present my budget to this Council next month I can promise you there will be a decrease in the mill rate.

So where do we go from here? I think the answer is simple. We keep building, we keep caring, we keep leading. We move forward with pride and purpose – self-assured in our successes of the past and present, and eager to confront our challenges head on with poise and confidence. This energized City is experiencing exciting times, but the work is far from complete.

Together we will continue to build a bright future for ourselves, we will continue the ever important work of caring for our people and putting the needs of our community at the forefront of our agenda, and we will continue leading with the same foresight and vision that has brought us this far already.

We have been infused with energy, in every facet of our government - and now it's up to us to keep that energy high, to keep that energy going, to keep that energy booming. I am honored and humbled to serve as your Mayor, and I know the best is yet to come!