



William R. Wild - Mayor

Mayor William R. Wild
City of Westland

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2017 State of the City Address

Distinguished members of the Westland City Council, Elected and Appointed Officials, dedicated members of the Westland Boards and Commissions, hardworking City Employees, members of Westland's thriving business community, our regional partners, all of our veterans and most importantly, the great citizens of Westland: *Welcome.*

I especially want to welcome my beautiful wife Sherri, my son Luke and my daughters Lilly and Payton who are with us tonight. Any elected official will tell you we could not do these jobs without the support of our families. Well, my family, they are my biggest supporters. They ground me, inspire me, and I love them more than anything.

Give gifts to family

I am honored to be with you tonight as I deliver my 11th State of the City address as your Mayor. (Grey hair)

The City of Westland celebrated its 50th anniversary this past year and it really was a special year full of incredible celebrations, special events, we brought back all of the former mayors, fireworks, the opening of the time capsule that was buried in 1966 and of course, the recent burial of our own time capsule last week right here in front of City Hall, that will be opened up in 2066.

We are all here today because we love our city. We care about this incredible place that we call home. As I travel around the city, and interact with residents on a daily basis, one thing that is always consistent is that the residents of Westland are just as proud and passionate, about our City in 2017 as the first residents were back in 1966.

As you may know, in 2014 Westland was named one of America's 50 Best Cities to live in by the publication 24/7 Wall Street, joining other fine American cities

like Charleston SC., Alexandria VA., Cape Corral FL. and even our neighbors up in Troy MI.

The study cited our low crime rate, steady employment growth, affordable housing, and financial stability among the multiple reasons for our inclusion on their list.

This was not a paid advertisement. This was something that the City earned, you earned, it wasn't easy, most things worth doing aren't, but you should be very proud, I know I am.

Exemplified by the indicators cited by 24/7 Wall Street... and many others... I can say proudly... that the *state of our city* is strong. We are an innovative city with a growing economy and the foundations of a thriving entrepreneurial network along with a very cool... Emerging food scene. Ladies and gentlemen, we are in the midst of a resurgence of our great city that is beginning to be felt in *every corner of the community*.

We have a talented, dedicated team that is working **together** every day... to maintain this momentum... and tonight... I want share with you some successes. I'm going to speak to how the city is using innovation throughout the departments to better serve our residents and share plans on how **together** we are planning ahead to an even brighter future for the next generation of Westlanders.

18th DIST. COURT

The 18th District Court, led by Chief Judge Sandra Ference-Cicirelli along with the Honorable Judge Mark McConnell, Court Administrator James Gibbs, Magistrate David Wiacek and all of their hard working employees, who professionally handle one of the Wayne County court systems, highest caseloads.

The court has implemented several innovations to reduce long lines in an effort to maintain high standards of customer service. Most notably, in the creation of a new misdemeanor driving docket, and by now offering... online payments and ticket mediation through the courts updated website.

Kudos are also deserved for the multifunctioning probation staff and the expanded Community Service program which helps the city maintain several city buildings and also helps by removing blight, from area roadways.

Thank you Judges and I don't believe that there is a better ran District Court in the State. Keep up the great work!

ASSESSING

The Department of Assessing, led by the talented Jennifer Nieman, who earlier this year achieved the very prestigious level 4 certification through the State of Michigan, always stays busy.

This year the department completed the third year of its state required residential reinspection program and has now completed roughly 15,000 homes to date.

While some property owners are now being assessed for non-permitted improvements, several others... were pleasantly surprised to see their assessments going down... after removing garages, decks and in ground pools.

The Department also processed and mailed out over 28,000 Street lighting and property assessments while recently wrapping up their annual March Board of review with only 58 homeowners appealing their valuations.

When tax payers opened up their assessments this year... most found that their property had gone up in value substantially while their taxes, only went up marginally. The city saw a 6% increase in property values of residential properties, and an 11% increase for commercial properties.

While home values are quickly rising back to pre-recession prices, Westland taxpayers, because of the protection of Proposal A, have only received inflationary tax increases during this recovery phase of the economy. This year's increase, if you did not sell your home or change your homestead status, was less than 1%.

While sometimes it feels to all of us, that our taxes keep going up and a few years back the city had to raise the ACT345 Millage that covers the pensions of our Police and Firefighters. It's worth noting though, that the total portion of your tax bill that goes to the City of Westland has actually gone down since 2007.

Behind me you will see a graph showing the average city taxes paid by Westland residents in 2007 versus today. In 2007, the average city paid taxes were at an all-time high, with the average residential bill costing \$720. Today, the average tax bill for city millages is only \$682, which is still 5% below what you were paying in 2007.

But this alone doesn't tell the whole story. Taxable value (represented by the blue bars), which is the number taxes are calculated on, is capped by law and moves up very slowly. But the SEV, (state equalized value-represented by the red bars), which is the better measure of the actual value of your property, is increasing steadily. This means not only are your taxes staying down, but your property is becoming worth more.

While this is good news for the property owners, it does create a challenge for the city. As our costs continue to increase, our revenue streams have not kept pace.

But, in spite of this, we have been able to provide exceptional service to you as a community with approximately 100 less employees than we had ten years ago and we are still, through innovation, service consolidations, and stretching every dollar finding ways to improve the quality of life for Westland residents and continuing to reinvest in the city's infrastructure.

I also think it's worth noting... that the recent capital investments in the City, including the new City Hall, The New Fire Station, Improvements to the Jefferson Barns Community Vitality Center, The Mike Modano Arena and the Farmers Market, along with all of the recent road work, was accomplished without asking for additional millages and we will continue to find creative solutions to move the city forward.

BUILDING & PLANNING

The Building and Planning Departments are led by longtime Westland resident Bruce Thompson. Bruce has worked for the City since 1995 and has professionally and faithfully served under 3 mayors.

It has been another steady year for the Building Department with several new housing starts, an improving economy, and a very active local real estate market which drives the permit, review and inspection process.

The Planning Department is currently overseeing an update of the City's Masterplan and has been working with planning professionals from Livonia based OHM Advisors and a Master Plan Steering Committee to complete this important process and are asking residents to participate in a master plan survey that's available now, on the city's website.

Along with the Master plan, the committee is also working on smaller area plans for the Historic Norwayne District and the Westland Historic Village Park and a citywide bike path plan.

FINANCE & BUDGET

The Department of Finance is led by Finance Director Steve Smith along with Budget Director Debra Peck and Purchasing Director Devin Adams and their eight hard working clerical staff members.

The Finance Department recently received an unmodified audit opinion, which is the best a municipality can receive.

The Department also oversaw an increase in the City's bond rating from Standard and Poor's from A to A+.

The Department has successfully managed the back end of the recent water meter upgrade program and reports that over 90% of the 27,000 meters have been changed out and the accounts have been reconciled.

The Finance team also calculated and mailed over 30,000 tax bills (twice) last year along with calculating and mailing over 13,000 water bills monthly while processing over 60,000 payments over the counter.

The talented Mrs. Peck is the architect of my proposed 2017/18 budget which is a \$66 million dollar balanced budget that adds over half a million dollars to the city's rainy day fund, bringing our general fund surplus to 6 million dollars and pays extra towards the city's unfunded pension obligations.

The proposed budget, which is available to view online on the city's website, also provides for much needed investments in neighborhoods, roads, parks, and funds the purchase of new Police and Fire vehicles.

FIRE DEPT.

The past year has been a year of change within The Westland Fire Department.

In October, we saw the retirement of longtime Fire Chief Michael Reddy, who served the city proudly for 25 years and had served as Chief for sixteen years and we welcomed in new Fire Chief Mike Stradtner a 22 year veteran of the Department.

While Chief Stradtner will continue to serve as Fire Chief for both the City of Westland and the City of Wayne, as Chief Reddy had for the past four years, February 1st of 2017 brought an official end to the merger of the Fire Departments of the two cities.

While gaining State wide accolades for this innovative public safety consolidation, in this case, keeping the merger together as the cities moved in different directions financially proved to be too much for the cities to meet the ultimate goal of creating a Fire Authority that would create savings for the cities and sustainability for the departments.

While Innovation has been known to be messy at times, and even the great Thomas Edison is said to have failed over 700 times in creating a better light bulb, this collaboration did help both departments through periods of declining numbers of firefighters, gave better service to the residents of both cities and did play a large role in both departments receiving Federal Safer Grants to help fund additional firefighters.

One success that came out of the merger has been that Westland has been able to save close to \$1million dollars over the life of Chief Reddy's shared chief contract and we continue to save money as Chief Stradtner continues in this role.

As the current Safer Grant that is funding 13 firefighters begins to expire throughout the upcoming year, we will slowly scale our number of firefighters back to the previous headcount of 61. Additional funding has been included in my proposed budget to increase that number to 64.

Moving forward, Chief Stradtner and our grant writing team from Nocerini Strategies will be working diligently for additional grant funding and I will continue working with the City Council for funding as well,

My proposed budget also includes funding for a new ladder truck, at a cost of \$800k which will be financed over 7 years and two new rescue vehicles at a cost of \$197k each to get us back on schedule of replacing our oldest unit on an annual basis. Funds for these purchases will come from the city's Capital improvement fund.

COMM. DEV. & HOUSING

Westland's Community Development and Housing Department is led by Mrs. Joanne Campbell and Deputy Rick Gowan and their dedicated employees. As a

team, they operate the incredible Jefferson Barns Community Vitality Center, located in the Historic Norwayne district.

The space within the Vitality Center is now fully occupied by value added community partners like Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency and The Norwayne Community Citizens Council, led by longtime Westland resident Henry Johnson.

The center is the hub of the city's community assistance efforts related to promoting home ownership through successful programs like the unique partnership with the William D Ford Career Tech Construction Technology Program to construct new homes for first time buyers and the Homebuyer Assistance Program which provides qualified individuals with down payment assistance to help bridge the gap from renting to homeownership.

The center is now also home to the Norwayne Boxing Gym, the Reading Room Library and the Jefferson Barns Learning Center, where we are teaching beginning coding classes to area youth.

The Housing Department staff manages 1200 housing vouchers annually, including project based vouchers for Westgate Towers, Senior Assisted Living and 20 special vouchers for Norwayne Veterans.

Mrs. Campbell runs a well-oiled machine and her department consistently receives "High Performer" rating under HUD's annual Management Assessment

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

The City's Innovation and Technology Department, or the DoIT Team, as we like to call them, is led by one of the State's bright young CIOs Dan Bourdeau and his Deputy Craig Brown. Dan is a key member of my Executive Team and is a Westland resident as well.

In just a few short years, under Dan's leadership, and the increasing role technology is playing in our new City Hall, the City of Westland has quickly become one of the State's most technologically advanced cities and it seems like cities across the region are touring the building on a weekly basis to study it.

Some of the DoIT Team's accomplishments this year have been the successful defense from a ransomware attack that could have cost the city \$25k in ransom for each of the City's 300 devices.

The Department also created a fire hydrant inspection app for the Westland Fire Department which now allows inspection of the City's 1500 fire hydrants in several weeks as compared to several months.

The team also eliminated the manual paper process for Building Department inspections and replaced it with a real time inspection system using City Works Online software. Under this new module, inspection and service records are now easily retained and reportable, and helps keep our inspectors on the street instead of in front of a computer at City Hall.

For these achievements, and others, the Department has won several Operation Excellence Awards and was featured recently in "State Tech" Magazine for their efforts.

And the DoIT Team is not through just yet... Tonight the City of Westland is proud to offer a brand new, easy way to connect with the city. It's a new APP that's available for your smart devices called Westland Click & Fix. Its powered by SeeClickFix and its available free of charge on both the Apple App and Google Play stores.

With this easy to use new APP you can now report any concerns you may have to the City in 3 short clicks.

Now when you see a pothole and report it, the APP uses your GPS location to help city road crews know exactly where the concern is. You can also attach a picture so the staff has an idea of what type of repair is needed.

Submissions from the APP are automatically entered into the city's work order system and assigned a tracking number.

Residents will receive an acknowledgment of their submission with this tracking number also.

When the issue is closed in the city's work order system the residents are notified via e-mail and the status is updated in the APP as well.

Whether it be a pothole, a streetlight that is out, or neighborhood blight, App users can search a list of reported issues and add their own pictures and information

instead of having to open a new request for a concern that has already been reported.

The APP is being used by 300 cities and over 1 million residents, nationwide have used the APPs to date.

The Westland Click & Fix APP will also provide one click access to the City's event calendar on CityofWestland.com as well as the city's social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter and new features will be added in the upcoming months.

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

In January of 2017, the City transferred ordinance duties from the Fire Department to the newly formed Neighborhood Services Department. This department is now lead by Hassan Saab and will have the responsibility of offering enhanced traditional ordinance enforcement with a compassionate focus on resident education and customer service.

The Department will take a more proactive approach on blight and will be creating fun, interactive programs to encourage and recognize residents for maintaining and improving their properties.

As the City of Westland passes the 50 year marker, we thought it was time to give each of the city's neighborhoods what every 50 year old needs. A makeover!

So, beginning in the next few weeks, the City will embark on a new City Wide Neighborhood Makeover Plan and we will be asking the residents to join us in a citywide campaign to beautify all of our neighborhoods.

City Crews will soon begin the process of going through each of the city's neighborhoods, street by street, and we will begin with the PD Graham Elementary School neighborhood and then begin to work across the city.

Crews will have a comprehensive 50 point checklist for revitalizing each neighborhood. Items will range from street sweeping, tree trimming, replacing and straightening street signs, fixing streetlight outages, surveying road conditions for immediate or future repairs, jetting and cleaning sewers and catch basins, and replacing damaged trash or recycling bins and much more.

A complete list of services to be performed can soon be found on the City website and you will be able to track the progress of the program online and see what work was completed in your neighborhood.

We will be asking residents to take this opportunity to bring the exterior of their properties up to the best appearance as well and we will work with neighborhood associations to maximize this effort. For seniors or residents with special needs, we will be partnering with community organizations and local church groups to help.

As part of this program, under the city's Mission Green Initiative, the city will also begin replacing neighborhood boulevard trees that were lost to the emerald ash borer disease. You can learn more about this exciting neighborhood greening effort on Cityofwestland.com.

This exciting neighborhood makeover program will be an ongoing effort and we are going to need buy in and patience from the residents, as this may take several summers to complete, but as we continue to reinvest in the community, the time and effort will be well spent, as clean safe neighborhoods improve the values of all of our homes and are the city's lifeblood and the key to our future.

PERSONNEL

The City's personnel Department is led by Mrs. Cindy King and her small department packs a powerful punch. The work of her department over the last year has saved both our taxpayers and employees some serious money.

In the last year the Personnel Department, as required as fiduciary, conducted an in depth comprehensive analysis of our employees deferred compensation program assisted by Plante Moran Financial Advisors. They analyzed carriers, investment options and fees in an effort to give our employees the best, cost effective options for their investments.

The department also oversaw the transition of 220 city retirees over age 65 to cost effective Medicare Advantage Health Care plans that mirrored existing plans. While there was originally some angst among retirees, all have been successfully transitioned without any loss in benefit at an annual savings to the city of over \$500k, and this one innovative move will reduce the city's unfunded retirement health care liability by an estimated \$8-\$10 Million dollars.

Mrs. King also led the city's negotiation team in a recent six year contract with AFSCME local 1602 that was overwhelming ratified by the employees and affirmed unanimously by the City Council.

POLICE DEPT.

When you talk about a Department that has had an incredible year, you have to look no further than the Westland Police Department. The PD which is led by Chief Jeff Jedrusik and Deputy Chiefs Brian Miller and Randy Thivierge really has done an incredible job.

The Department last year became only the 6th police agency in Michigan to become CALEA Certified. CALEA is the highest level of certification from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. The CALEA accreditation exemplifies the department's commitment to the safety of the community and shows that officers are held to the highest standard in law enforcement.

In 2016 every Police Department employee received training in:

Mental Health First Aid, Use of force, emergency vehicle operation, risk management, and cultural diversity.

Three of our officers enrolled in Eastern Michigan University's prestigious Police Staff & Command Leadership Program.

The Department has also worked diligently to strengthen community relations (or as Mayors like to call them, our social muscles) by developing and leveraging ongoing partnerships with:

The Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority, The Westland Police Community Partnership Committee, John Glenn High School, where we station a school resource officer, and The Westland Disability Concerns Committee.

We currently have 81 sworn officers and 45 civilian employees. 4 of the officers are on a partially funded Federal Cops Grant that expires in December of 2018, and Chief Jedrusik and Nocerini Strategies will be working overtime with the Justice Department to get that grant renewed, and like with the situation I explained earlier with the Fire Department, I'll be working hand in hand with the City Council to keep these much needed officers on the street.

Speaking earlier on cultural diversity, Chief Jedrusik, in a proactive attempt to hire a more culturally reflective police force, which has proven to be extremely challenging given the decreasing number of individuals seeking a career in law enforcement nationwide, has identified several ways to attract a diversified pool of potential candidates to the police academy including ride alongs for interested youth ages 17 and up, and introducing potential candidates to Westland's two police officer feeder programs, the Police Explorer program which is for people ages 14-21 and The Westland Police Service Aide program which utilizes civilians inside the Police Department to keep more of our uniformed officers on the street.

The Chief reports that these efforts are starting to bear fruit and we are adding diversity to the ranks, and I pledge to work together with him in this effort to build a more culturally diverse public safety department that is more reflective of our community.

You may have noticed Westland has been in the news more for crime and larceny than in the past, rest assured the crime rate isn't going up in Westland, and the stats on the screen prove that out. The reason you are seeing more of Westland's crime on the news and on social media is because it's a powerful new tool that the Westland Police are using to solve crimes and catch the bad guys.

It's a policy that was given a lot of thought because of the potential negative image it would portray, but so far the results have been impressive and word is getting out quickly that if you commit a crime in Westland, you are going to get caught and brought to justice.

Let's give our Chief and the 81 sworn officers and 45 civilian employees of the Westland Police Department a round of applause, **congratulations**

PARKS & REC.

The Westland Parks & Recreation Department is led by the newest member to my Administrative Team, Mrs. LaTricia Gunnells.

Mrs. Gunnells, a native Detroiter came to us after a national search for a new Director, and we were fortunate to hire her away from the City of Oklahoma City.

I've tasked Mrs. Gunnells with the responsibility of rebuilding this department from the ground up. This is an area of the city that we can do better and we will.

We have started by rebuilding relationships with all of the local youth sports organizations and have brought them to the table in an effort to build out our programming portfolio. Representatives from these groups have also been asked to serve on a new Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to take a more active role in future planning.

With spring upon us, the Parks crews are working daily to have the City's 18 parks in top shape for Memorial Day Weekend and have just recently opened the Westland Municipal Golf Course for the season, and registration is now open for summer camp for area youth in a new partnership with the Livonia YMCA.

With improvements to the Mike Modano Ice Arena nearly complete, the focus this year, with the support of City Council, and with Wayne County Parks Millage money secured by Commissioner Glen Anderson, we will begin to start reinvesting in the City's baseball complexes. New fencing backstops, dugouts and benches will be coming to both Jaycee Park and Voss Field and all of our lighted fields will be fully functional.

Later this week, I will be meeting with representatives from The WYAA to discuss ways to improve the fields at Marshall Middle School as well.

When you combine these investments, along with the new baseball complex at The Jefferson Barns Community Vitality Center, soon there will be no better city to play baseball in than the All American City.

The Parks & Recreation Department will also soon begin, with input from the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee, formulating a 5yr plan to start updating the amenities within every city park.

As part of this plan, I'm excited to work with the residents in Southeast Westland on reimagining Stottlemeyer Park, now that the demolition of the former Thomas Gist Academy is complete. We look forward to working with our other Wayne County Commissioner Al Hadius to secure funding to help bring modern park amenities to this large neighborhood park located within the Historic Annapolis Park Subdivision.

PUBLIC SERVICE

The Westland Department of Public Service is led by Civil Engineer Ramzi El-Gareb and his Deputies, Hassan Saab and Doug Morton. Between the three of them

they have over 60 years' experience in public works management and you won't find a more experienced team at the local level, anywhere in the state.

We built this leadership team because as we have started to reinvest in the City of Westland, we knew that much work was needed to improve the city's aging infrastructure and we needed experienced management to get the job done.

In the past year several large projects were completed, such as the water meter upgrade project that saw the removal and replacement of 27,000 obsolete water meters, the completion of the 50 year old Inkster Road pump station replacement and the rebuild of the Middlebelt pump station, all while responding to over 100 water main breaks.

Along with those investments in the City's water and sewer infrastructure there was major roadwork completed in the city as well including, major work on Newburgh Rd, the complete replacement of Central City Parkway, road work was also completed on Linville, Merritt, Randy, Gary, Terri, Berwick and Ritz and over \$300k worth of local road repairs in the Annapolis Park area alone.

This year will be no different with completion of the landscape work on Central City Parkway, overseeing the construction of the new Lions Pavilion at the Farmers & Artisans Marketplace, a major water main project that will include a new road on Bennington and Parkwood in the Elliott School neighborhood, the repaving of Cowan Rd. from Wayne to Farmington, utilizing a federal grant and roadwork improvements to Spring Valley in Holliday Park and Avondale between Forrest and Shuman.

Besides all of the great work the Department of Public Service provides they are always looking for ways to improve. One area that residents will see improvement moving forward will be how the city handles lead water service line replacement and record keeping.

The City of Westland is currently creating a data base that will be available to residents to access on the City Website that will have a description of the material type of piping before and after the meter for every home in the city, whether it is copper, lead, galvanized or plastic. The goal of this database is to offer peace of mind to our residents, increase transparency and to perhaps even add value to homebuyers or sellers. This database is currently under construction and will soon be available; we believe it will be the first of its kind in the state.

The Department has also updated its policies and procedures for replacing lead service lines that are discovered during maintenance of the system. The City will no longer perform partial replacements of lead service lines and will do full replacement from the house to the line. The department has also updated the communication policy for local residents when this work is being performed.

The goal of the Westland Water Department is to not only meet, but exceed, all federal and state requirements and recommendations with regard to lead water service line removals.

SR. RESOURCES

It's been another great year at our Senior Resource Department. This Department and the Westland Friendship Center is run by the very energetic Barb Marcum and her Deputy Donna Jackson and staff.

The Friendship Center continues to offer incredible programming for our residents 50 years and older, and was recently spotlighted as one of Michigan's top Senior Centers in the winter edition of Michigan Innovative Health Magazine.

This past year saw the creation of the Lifelong Learning Center that is a unique partnership with Wayne County Community College and seniors now have the chance to continue their education, right at the Friendship Center.

The Friendship Center is one of the City's oldest buildings and the next building that the city will begin reinvesting in. A comprehensive capital needs assessment of the building has been completed and my proposed budget includes funding from the Capital Improvement fund to replace the roof.

ECONOMIC DEV.

In Westland, with a strong local economy, we spend a lot of time on Economic Development and we approach it in a team manner. Our team is led by Economic Development Director Thelma Kubitskey, City Planner Bruce Thompson, myself and Deputy Mayor Mike Reddy and on many occasions City Council President Jim Godbout.

Our team has worked hard over the last year to welcome over 20 new businesses to the city and several large investments. Some of the most notable were the new JC Penney Appliance Store and Sephora at the mall, the repurposing of the former Fitness Usa building into an incredible power center occupied by Art Van Pure Sleep, T-Mobile and FedEx.

We also saw a \$15 million dollar investment by Kroger for their Cherry Hill store and the \$4.2 Million dollar renovation by Parkside Credit Union and a \$450k exterior renovation project by Todd Wenzel Buick/GMC.

In the housing sector we saw a \$17 million dollar investment by Greenwood Villa and the second phase of the successful Clyde Smith Farms subdivision and Council has recently approved the rezoning for a new \$25 Million dollar Pulte subdivision on Joy Rd and final site plans for a \$12 million dollar Ciena Health skilled nursing facility on Newburgh and Ford road.

Over the last year we have witnessed a change in the retail market as consumers move from brick and mortar shopping to the ease of online shopping, which has affected us locally with the closing of Macy's at the Westland Shopping Center and the closing of longtime retailer Kmart. We have also seen a correction in the restaurant business as national chains struggle for market space with the new fast casuals. With this we have witnessed the closing of Westland's Max and Erma's, Ruby Tuesday and Fire Mountain, all of these are located in the City's famous Shop & Dine District.

But rest assured, we won't let this slow us down. Our team is working with the new owners of Westland Shopping Center to fill the vacant Macy's store and will be working with them to create three additional out lots on the site to attract additional national restaurants.

We are proud of the emerging food scene here in Westland with over 100 restaurants now and over the last year we have welcomed new entries in the BBQ, Thai, Mexican, and sushi classes and we will soon be hosting a ribbon cutting on Gus's World Famous Fried Chicken and Popeye's Louisiana Kitchen as well.

Tonight, we are going to announce some additional investments in the Shopping & Dining District.

I'm pleased to announce that the former Max & Erma's will soon be home to Anna's House, a retro diner style restaurant that will specialize in providing all natural, fresh unique dishes and has a passion for meeting the dietary preferences of the community and have included gluten-free-dairy-free and vegetarian options to accommodate all lifestyles.

Introduce the team for Anna's House

I'd like to also announce the long awaited redevelopment of the former Quo Vadis site on Wayne Road. The property will soon be the new home for Community Financial Credit Union who will build a brand new state of the art banking facility and also create two additional out lots for future development.

Introduce the team from Community Financial Credit Union

I'd like to also announce that later this year, Garden City Hospital has plans to make a major investment in the City of Westland and their CEO Saju George is here with us today.

As you can see, it's been a busy year and the City of Westland is continuing to grow both residentially and commercially. The City of Westland is HOT!

TRANSPARENCY

Another area that the city is striving to grow and improve in is the area of transparency. It is something we take seriously, and over the last year the city has been much more transparent and has now created an OpenGov portal on the City Website.

Under the Open Gov tab you will find the Freedom of Information process has been simplified, and now the City's most requested documents are displayed at your fingertips without even having to file a FOIA request.

The city's new APP Westland Click & Fix will make the reporting of citizen concerns and interaction with the city much more transparent as well.

I also want to applaud the City Council working with the City Clerk Mr. LeBlanc to make the City Council packets available to the public prior to the meetings

ARTS

Another area in which the City has made progress over the last year is in bringing more arts and cultural opportunities to the City's residents. You can enjoy viewing our new Art Gallery while you are at City Hall this evening. This is an incredible partnership between the City of Westland and the Three Cities Art Club.

Inspire Theatre, a local community theatre group, continues performing to sellout crowds inside the Westland Center for the Arts on Warren Rd

There has been a recent movement to create an Arts Council in the city and I'm interested in talking to those who may have interest in its formation.

COMPASSION

As I close out my speech for tonight I want to bring us back to Compassion. You hear me speak a lot about compassion and we have been recognized as Michigan's first Compassionate City.

Why is this important? I believe Compassion is the one thing that ties our community together. Compassion doesn't know color, race, age, gender or political affiliation.

Compassion has the power to inspire and it has the power to heal. Over the last several years as Mayor, I've been working to harness the compassion within our city as a way to move the city forward, even when we screw up.

We witness, on a daily basis, incredible acts of kindness and compassion in our city. Whether it is resident Vic Barra and Jim Hart and Councilman Mike Kehrer building ramps for disabled veterans, or the volunteers at the Friendship Center who deliver meals on wheels daily to Westland's most vulnerable residents.

Compassion is powerful and in us all.

On the screen you are about to see a random act of kindness performed by a Westland Police officer in the regular course of duty on a very unregular day...

Roll video of Officer

We also saw another officer get national acclaim over a random act of kindness that went viral on Facebook and ultimately received over 1 million views and ended up with the officer and the young father he pulled over, and then took to Walmart to purchase a car seat meeting up on the Steve Harvey Show.

We see these acts of kindness and when we do it reinforces how far we have come together creating a more Compassionate City and then there are days when we just screw up. Yes, we do screw up. And when we do, sometimes we take it on the chin through the same lenses of social media.

But what makes us special and what sets us apart as a community, is when we screw up, we fix it and make it right.

So, Compassion is powerful, it can inspire, it can heal, and most importantly it allows us to forgive, and that's what makes a community....

As you can see, there are incredible things happening all across our great city and our team is working hard to improve our city and elevate the quality of life for our residents while offering access to opportunity and lifelong learning.

There are plenty of great things in store for later this year. I hope to see you all at Blues Brews and BBQ later this summer and then don't forget to join us as we celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Norwayne this year as well.

The State of the City of Westland is Strong

God Bless and good night.