

Good morning, and welcome to all who are watching online and to all of you who have joined us in person today at this wonderful downtown venue. Thank you to the members of the Board of Aldermen present today, to our other invited dignitaries, and to our special guests.

Last month, the City of Frederick entered into a multi-year agreement with the Ausherman Family Foundation to assume the management of New Spire Arts Stages, under the leadership of the Weinberg Center for the Arts and Executive Theatre Manager John Healy. This MOU creates a strong partnership to work on behalf of the best interests of the theatre and Downtown Arts and Entertainment District in Frederick. It's a common thread that when our City is at its best, when there is collaboration among organizations sharing a common goal, we can accomplish amazing things.

For the past two and half years, that collaboration has helped see our city, county, state, nation, and world through some of the most challenging times we will hopefully ever encounter. I often say the word "Mayor" is the title I'm honored to hold. But the work of the Mayor that gets done on the ground, the work that makes this City a great place to live, work and raise a family, is done by all of us. And it's done when we work together to move Frederick forward. So, thank you to our City staff present today and watching, community organizations, businesses, and residents for your unwavering commitment to our community.

I would be remiss if I did not make a point to recognize my wife who is here and our now young adult daughters, possibly watching from afar, for their unyielding support. This job is a consistently rewarding opportunity, but one that requires significant time and sacrifice. I am grateful for their support, along with many others, which allows us to do this work in service to the City I love. Tammy, Clare, Erin – you are my heroes.

A State of the City Address is a call for celebration. And make no mistake, there is much to celebrate in the City of Frederick. Over the past year, we have embarked on what I have continued to call

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transformational opportunities for the City and its residents. The City's sound financial positioning is allowing us to make historic investments in our workforce, and our infrastructure, to provide the best service delivery possible to residents, businesses, and visitors.

But my message today is also a call for continued action and progress. The future of Frederick will be shaped by the work we accomplish, and how we come together to accomplish it. Transformational opportunities will continue through the City's Commitment to Community and Dedication to Progress.

This morning, I am sharing the progress we've made over the last year and how we will continue to build on that to address the challenges that lie ahead. When the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, we were required to nimbly adapt to new challenges to maintain the health and safety of our workforce and community. This meant delaying some goals and priorities. But, two years later, we can confidently fully re-commit to the vision of CommUNITY 2030, the city's first multi-year strategic plan. And this plan continues to lay out a roadmap for the future of the City and the goals my administration is committed to accomplishing.

I believe sustainable communities possess three qualities – they are socially progressive, economically strong...and environmentally aware. In CommUNITY 2030 we are committed to planning our community in ways that address equity, mobility, and climate action.

Here are just a few examples of our commitment and progress:

My administration has prioritized equity within city government operations since day one. After completing a study of our procurement policies in 2021, we confirmed long-held concerns about disparities in municipal contracting. I am extraordinarily proud of the steps we have taken to make policy changes that will bolster opportunities for underrepresented businesses in the City of Frederick. Since this study was completed, and our last state of the City address, we onboarded our first Manager of Equity and Inclusion

who is playing an integral role in developing and implementing new procurement policies.

Additionally, in the coming weeks, we will be announcing a new Business Outreach Coordinator, in our Equity Office, who will be dedicated to working in the community with Minority and Women Owned Businesses to increase their participation in our contracting processes.

These efforts will be reviewed by our recently appointed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Council, a group of business and community leaders committed to access and opportunity for all.

Another area of commitment, so the City can provide the best possible service delivery, is to remain a competitive employer of choice.

During this year's budget cycle, we made an historic investment in our workforce, adopting a new pay scale and adding more than 30 critically needed new positions. These adjustments, which include a full-time minimum wage of more than twenty-one dollars per hour, bring us more in line with the regional market.

And just this week, the Board of Aldermen began an evaluation of the City's employee benefits package to continue progress in attracting and retaining the highest quality workforce possible.

But our commitment doesn't end with our workforce. I recognize the value of a growing and diverse private sector providing competitive employment. CommUNITY 2030 pledges support to entrepreneurship, such as incubator and accelerator programs operated through The Frederick Innovative Technology Center. Our current year's budget provides a \$250,000 grant to assist FITCI in obtaining and renovating a new location to continue to grow their programs.

Which brings us to being economically strong:

The City is where job and housing growth should occur, and we are dedicated to making the necessary investments that growth

requires...for example addressing our complete transportation needs.

I am committed to providing a diverse array of transportation options for our residents as we recognize the benefits of a more walkable, bikeable, and drive-able City.

Recently announced state construction funding for the widening of Route 15 as part of the state's consolidated transportation plan is a major step to address a long-constrained economic development lifeline for our community.

Our East Street Rails with Trails project has received significant congressionally directed funding to support a bridge over Route 26, as we build bicycle infrastructure from Monocacy Boulevard to the downtown Frederick MARC station along the old Pennsylvania Railroad line, as part of the City's overall path plan.

And annual budgeted improvements for intersections, crosswalks, missing sidewalks, and ADA improvements all enhance the commuting and leisure options for our residents.

Through sustainable urban planning, I am excited by the prospects of the East Street corridor study as part of the East Street Small Area Planning process and the related efforts to adopt the City's first Form-Based Code. This multi-faceted effort has allowed our planning division to capture robust public engagement in shaping the future of Frederick's east side. The East Street Redesign will give us the tools and determine the suitability for using the form-based code process through future small area plans.

With the City expected to add another 10,000 residents over the next decade, we must plan to meet the ever-increasing cultural, social, and economic needs of the residents of today, and the residents of tomorrow, by creating services and opportunities that allow residents to create and sustain meaningful relationships and produce a high quality of life.

For example, to ensure that City parks and programming grow along with our population, we embarked on a Parks and Recreation master plan. This plan provides guidance for future development and redevelopment of the City's parks, recreation programming, and facilities. The plan will incorporate energy efficiency and sustainable strategies, evaluate collaborative opportunities with other entities, and explore accessibility opportunities. While it has taken us longer to get here than originally planned, the results of the work our consultant, GreenPlay, has compiled will be presented to the Board of Aldermen at a workshop later this month.

We have already made significant progress in parks and recreation improvements through investments such as the City's first exclusive pickleball-plex at Monocacy Village Park, the continued build-out of Westside Regional Park, and the new Bocce Ball Courts at Baker Park. As part of these investments, I am excited to announce a ribbon cutting ceremony for the grand opening of the Bocce courts will take place September 29. More details on that event will be released soon.

I'll frequently say that while we are not perfect, we are committed to being the best that we can and I am proud of the overall safety in Frederick, our low levels of crime, and the police department's commitment to use data and available resources to our community's best advantage.

Frederick's vibrant and thriving Community Centers contribute significantly to maintaining that safety.

As we continue to welcome more residents and visitors to our City, making the necessary investments to maintain this safety and vibrancy is critical.

I am proud that my administration will be the one to move our police department into a new, state-of-the-art headquarters in the heart of downtown, worthy of the men and women who work there. Located at 100 East All Saints Street, this new facility will allow our department to consolidate from multiple locations including their current

overcrowded home, into a space that our community can not only be proud of but also gather in for community events. This design build project is underway and is our first design-build project with a minority and women owned enterprise participation goal, as part of our updated purchasing policies.

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Continuing in the area of public safety, our police department has fully implemented its body-worn camera policy, which outfits each police officer with two body cameras.

The Nighttime Economy Task Force, established by the police department in partnership with several City, County and allied agencies, is committed to tackling quality of life concerns that arise at local restaurants and bars using creative problem solving and collaboration.

The largest, and most critical project to maintaining a vibrant community continues to be the construction of a downtown hotel and conference center. Despite a pause on the project due to COVID-19, it continues to be a priority for my administration, and plans have been filed to put this project in front of our Planning Commission and Historic Preservation Commission in coming months.

A year ago, I announced the beginning of Operation Safe Speed, an initiative led by the Frederick Police Department to collect data and distribute Traffic Safety Specialists to address speeding concerns across our City. It conforms to the goals of the Vision Zero resolution the city has adopted.

We know enforcement is only part of the solution. So, this year's budget also includes 500-thousand dollars for a new capital improvements project dedicated to traffic calming. Our engineering department is following a data-driven approach and identifying the areas and the best engineering-based solutions that can limit speeding. But as I said a year ago, this is a challenge in which we all must play a role. As residents, we individually must do our part by maintaining safe driving habits and safe speeds.

And our Department of Public Works is also entering year three of the implementation of the Vacant Property Registry Ordinance, which allows the City to maintain a list of vacant properties and collect fees as necessary if landlords don't take steps to bring economic vitality to long empty spaces.

At the Department of Housing and Human Services, we've identified two major infrastructure investments as opportunities to better serve the residents of Frederick. One is more permanent supportive housing. The other is better service delivery on the west side of the City.

The department is currently working to renovate space at 100 South Market Street for permanent supportive housing, along with food service improvements.

And the department has identified space for a westside community health center, which we hope to announce soon.

Finally, to create a sustainable future with environmental action for the City of Frederick, we must innovate.

While our Carroll Creek Linear Park sets the standard for flood mitigation projects, it is also a model for others. For example, Statesboro, Georgia. In April, we welcomed for the second time a delegation from that community to tour our efforts as the inspiration for their Blue Mile. I look forward to seeing the progress they will make in coming years. At the same time, we know that the ongoing impacts of climate change mean we cannot rest on past success. Thanks to funds provided under the American Rescue Plan Act...congressionally directed spending through our federal delegation...and our own capital improvements program...we continue to make significant investments to improve storm water infrastructure based on recommendations provided by the Army Corps of Engineers. At 95% design we expect to see construction on the first of these efforts, the Motter Avenue drainage area, this coming spring. These improvements aid in our commitment to safe, secure, and effective infrastructure.

In June, our Sustainability department partnered with Key City Compost to launch a residential composting pilot. This free-to-residents program has allowed us to determine the clear level of resident interest in composting. Reducing food waste relieves stress on our county landfill, benefits the environment through development of healthy soil, and can reduce the City's solid waste disposal costs.

With the program established in two areas of the City and nearly 800 homes registered, next week, we will be asking the Board of Aldermen to expand the pilot. As it progresses, we will continue to examine the costs to determine the program's Citywide viability.

We also want to ensure an increasingly diverse vehicle landscape can be accommodated. As electric vehicles become more common, our infrastructure in the City needs to keep up. We're identifying the location for new and expanded electric vehicle charging stations...including in our parking garages...as part of implementing our adopted EV plan.

Earlier in this address I referenced that we are at our best when we collaborate. For a municipal government to do the work of its people...for its people...it is absolutely critical that the people are in the conversation. Over the past year, our communications department has expanded the City's translation and interpretation service to ensure residents for whom English is not the primary language are able to participate in the government process.

We also are in the middle of reimagining our Neighborhood Advisory Council program and modernizing how we undertake community engagement. And we want to hear from you. Information on the NAC program and how you can be involved...as we evolve...can be found on our home page on city-of-frederick-m-d-dot-gov.

And today, I am proud to announce another community engagement opportunity – called What If, Frederick.

With the development of CommUNITY 2030, the need for ongoing community involvement is essential to its success. COVID impacted

that for the last two years but now we are ready to ensure we remain nimble enough to adapt our goals to ever-evolving community's needs. What If, Frederick will give our residents the opportunity to join the story of shaping our bright future by bringing your ideas to a public open house with government leaders encouraging collaboration on future projects and policies and help build the vision for a prosperous Frederick. More information on a date and location for this event will be available in coming days.

My administration, like every administration, has its own unique opportunity, and responsibility, to set the course for the future of the City of Frederick. But to be a City fully committed to the community and dedicated to progress, we have to ensure the structure, policies, and procedures by which we govern, are efficient and up to date. It is a priority of mine to update the City's charter to provide the most equitable and representative government processes for our community.

To that end, today I am announcing the establishment of an extensive charter review. In the coming weeks, a charter review committee will be formed with the following objectives:

- Educating and engaging a robust discussion about the current charter.
- Reviewing language and processes of the current charter to determine revisions and amendments in The City of Frederick's best interest. And...
- Ensuring City government is representative, effective, transparent, responsive, and accountable.

Frederick is a City that is rooted in history. In the 1700s, we served largely as a pass-through town for migrants now more than 275 years later. Frederick has become a destination. That's due to the work and vision of many throughout our history who aspired to a vision of what Frederick could become. All of us share the story of that vision. Our vibrant and thriving downtown, west side, and neighborhoods tell the story of investment and our diverse and growing community share the story of inclusion and welcoming.

I said in my last State of the City address that I hoped we would learn the right lessons from the COVID pandemic. I think we are.

One of the responses to the pandemic I have been most proud of is the response of the community. Frederick residents proved their commitment to one another as residents volunteered to assist strangers businesses innovated and adapted their operations...and organizations rallied to ensure our most vulnerable had access to services and resources.

We all share the story of this progress, and what it takes to achieve.

This is how we build on the foundation Frederick's founders laid for what Frederick has and can still become.

I am invigorated by the work and know you are too. Please continue to join the story. For when we commit ourselves to community, and dedicate ourselves to progress, together we move Frederick forward.

Thank you.