

Thank you all for joining us this evening to celebrate the City we love. Thanks specifically to the Green Bay Botanical Garden for hosting us tonight, to Chairman Hill and the Oneida Nation for welcoming us to Oneida land, to our color guard for presenting the flags, to our artists - Pegasus and Kent Hutchison and Gregory Frederic for providing musical and visual art, respectively, and thanks to all our community's leaders and elected officials for attending tonight's event, especially members of our Common Council for being here, and more importantly, for the work they do on the behalf of residents every day. Every major decision we make in the city must be affirmed or rejected by our Common Council, and I'm grateful to each and every member for bringing their unique perspectives and philosophies to inform and shape the governance of our community. Leadership is a collaborative enterprise, or at least I believe it to be when it's done best, which is why I've focused on maintaining open lines of communication with all our Alders. I've also enjoyed a really strong personal and professional relationship with our County Executive, Troy Streckenbach. The interests of cities and counties inevitably diverge at points, but they align more often than not, and it's at these points of alignment that we've focused to do the work of the residents we serve jointly. The same could be said of the renewed relationship and the philosophy of cooperative governance which was formalized earlier this year between the City of Green Bay and the Oneida Nation.

The Oneida Nation has had a long-standing economic and cultural impact in our region, reaching back to the first half of the 19th century. The Oneida people have resided in Northeast Wisconsin since before the city of Green Bay was established. Oneida people came to the state of Wisconsin after fighting on the side of the colonists in the Revolutionary War and after having been displaced from their ancestral homeland by the New York state government. Since 1838 the Oneida Nation has called home the 65,400 acres in southwest Brown County and northern Outagamie County, a portion of which has since been incorporated into the boundaries of the City of Green Bay. This overlapping portion of the City is what necessitates a Cooperative Governance Agreement between our two governments.

The Agreement that's now in force recognizes the value of land transferred into federal trust and removed from property tax rolls, and it establishes a fair rate of compensation for the City. As importantly, however, the CGA also recognizes the value of a well-functioning relationship between the City and Oneida Nation, enabling our respective governments to engage in the joint provision of public safety services, infrastructure development, and other mutually beneficial partnerships. This Agreement is a two-way street with its true value in recognizing the benefits that accrue to the City of Green Bay, the Oneida Nation and our respective citizens and members with a formal agreement in place.

Green Bay and the Oneida Nation are uniting and cooperating for the common good, this is something to celebrate in our current divisive political climate. There are many forces active in our politics that seek division, but there's little reason to concede to that pressure, especially in this case. The Oneida people are our friends and neighbors; the Oneida Nation is sovereign; the Oneida Nation and the City of Green Bay are stronger when we work together. That much and more is even clearer to me now than it was when we began this journey of collaboration, and I hope it's clear to the people the Nation and City jointly serve.

I stand here today to make that point even clearer and more broadly. Unity is stronger than division; love is more powerful than hate; Green Bay is capable of and destined for greatness.

Our history as a people is great, and heroic, and tragic, and complicated. It's also inspiring. What this city has been through in the last two years has been an intense distillation of much good and bad. Our future is bright, but it is undetermined, and it's up to us to unite in the face of division to make a future for our city that's worthy of our proudest traditions and fit for our kids and grandkids.

But first, let's talk about these last two years. It's been quite a ride, huh? I don't know that the job description of Mayor fully encompassed everything I've faced in my two years in this office, but that's true of the job of citizen, too, and it's profoundly true of all our community's health care workers and frontline workers generally, including city employees in police, fire, sanitation, water, engineering. That's true of our kids and our teachers who endured academic and psychological challenges that were previously unimaginable. In short, it's true of us all: we got far more than we bargained for during this past pandemic year. And yet, our community has emerged on the other side eager to move forward to take on the challenges and opportunities we face in a united way. This is not to say that we all emerged from the pandemic, of course. Here in Greater Green Bay, we lost over 240 residents to COVID-19. Over 600,000 Americans have perished, including 8,000 Wisconsinites. For them and their families, please join me in a moment of silence to recognize this immeasurable loss.

Thank you. It's important to mourn this loss of life. It's also important to mourn the loss of social life we experienced during the pandemic. Humans were not meant to live as we did during the pandemic, but we did it to keep our most vulnerable friends and neighbors safe. The sacrifice was worth it, but the psychic wounds brought on by social isolation are still with us. Now, more than ever, it's essential that we come together, physically, socially, emotionally, to care for one another and reconstruct our community in a way that's more cohesive, resilient, and equitable. Now, COVID-19 wasn't good for

much of anything at all, but I think it's taught us what matters to us most and maybe showed us what we're capable of when we're at our best. Two things stand out: Social bonds are everything, and change is possible. These are two lessons I know I'll hold onto for many years to come.

Looking back a bit further, thinking about the last two years of our work in the City of Green Bay, I'm proud of what we've been able to accomplish. Maybe most importantly, if a little mundanely, we have put ourselves on strong financial footing. Thanks to the support of our Common Council and with the guidance of our expert Finance Department led by Director Diana Ellenbecker and Assistant Director Pam Manley, we have made decisions to eliminate the use of one-time spending, identify sustainable sources of revenue, draft and adopt a rolling 5-year Capital Improvement Plan, and prioritize the services that our residents need most. As a result, we've been able to build up our fund balance from \$26,555,039 to [\\$30,074,653](#), from the end of 2019 until the end of 2020. This is a sign of fiscal strength and it should improve our bond rating, which will make borrowing on capital projects more affordable in future years. In addition, the budgets that we've adopted have increased the number of authorized and funded police officer positions from 180 to 187, including the addition of two more Crisis Intervention-trained officers, and added another firefighter back to the Fire Department. And thanks to the wise deployment of revenue associated with the Wheel Tax and bonded dollars, our Department of Public Works under Director Steve Grenier's

leadership, has dramatically increased the budget for filling cracks and potholes and has increased the lane miles reconstructed nearly 40% when comparing 2020 to the 10 year average.

Another essential service, and one that depends on a solid network of roads, is GB Metro Transit. Under Patty Kiewiz's tremendous leadership, Metro has continued to innovate to provide reliable, affordable service to our city's residents. Patty's also instituted the first micro-transit service in the state of Wisconsin, enabling riders in certain areas of our community to hail a GB Metro On Demand micro-transit bus that will take them within a block of their intended destination. For transit lovers and observers, this is an incredibly exciting development, which points the way toward the future of mobility in this city and in communities around the world, especially ones that aren't very densely populated. Metro also recently formed a unique partnership with Brown County Public Health and our area health care providers to deploy a bus as a mobile vaccination unit to visit community businesses, organizations, and events in our collective effort to promote COVID vaccinations. This is the kind of community-focused, collaborative work Patty and Metro are well-known for, and I feel very optimistic about the future of GB Metro Transit under her leadership.

A spirit of teamwork and collaboration is also something Director Mike Hronek and his IT Department is known for. This ethic couldn't have been more clearly displayed during

these pandemic months as many city employees left the physical workplace and set up remote offices in their homes. Almost literally overnight our way of doing business was upended and has been dramatically changed forever, but none of it would have been possible without the total dedication of Mike and his team to making whatever changes were necessary to carry on the City's business.

Our Human Resource and Law Departments have also gone above and beyond, before and during the pandemic, to serve city residents and employees. Our HR Department, under the leadership of Joe Faulds, has taken a more active role in shaping the operations of the organization, working with the business community to improve processes and services and working with employees internally to modernize the workplace, instituting flexible work schedules, a more casual dress code, a flattened organizational structure with a focus on employee engagement, and formalizing strategic plans for each of our departments and the city as a whole. Our City Law Department, led by our City Attorney Vanessa Chavez, has been equally instrumental in representing and advising us as we've navigated the challenging legal waters of 2020. Vanessa and her team have also played critical roles in countless other consequential actions, including drafting the Cooperative Governance Agreement with the Oneida Nation, writing numerous development agreements, and taking on several successful and ongoing legal cases.

Again, these are the basics, but in order to achieve everything else, it's essential that we focus on strengthening our financial position, securing our infrastructure, breaking down internal and external silos and providing our police and fire departments with the resources they need to keep us safe. That's what we have done.

Speaking of public safety, our Fire Department, truly one of the finest in the country led by Chief David Litton, is an incredible example of the commitment to service excellence we are trying to live throughout our organization. The men and women of Local 141 are an incredible group of public servants whose exceptional work has made possible the recent merger with the Village of Bellevue's Fire Department, which was orchestrated by Chief Litton and Assistant Chiefs Rob Goplin and Ryan Gibbons. This had led to the more efficient provision of fire service in Southeast Green Bay and Bellevue, and it's led to the improvement of Bellevue's Insurance Services Office rating and the continuation of Green Bay's top rating.

Our Police Department, under the past leadership of Chief Andrew Smith and the interim stewardship of Chief Jim Runge, has also accomplished a great deal in the past two years, including the adoption of body worn cameras for all officers, thanks to the city's partnership with the Green Bay Packers. Our officers also defused and de-escalated a number of very tense and dangerous standoff situations, delivered a baby outside a Walgreen's, compassionately engaged with our homeless residents on

countless occasions, and intervened to end the shooting at the Radisson without additional loss of life among bystanders. The list of good deeds goes on and on, and words fail to capture the good work they do, but I am immensely proud of the commitment shown by our officers to the safety of our citizens every single day.

Another service we provide, and really the most essential of all, is the drinking water of the Green Bay Water Utility. General Manager Nancy Quirk and the entirety of her team are a talented and committed group that quietly go about the work of providing residents and businesses some of the best-tasting, safest, and most reliable drinking water in the country. And it is thanks to Nancy's leadership and the dedication of frontline utility workers, that we have gotten the lead out of all Green Bay's pipes. This milestone was celebrated in the summer of 2020 and has been recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency as a truly noteworthy achievement.

But that's not all we've done, and it would be insufficient if we were to limit our aspirations in this way. Green Bay is destined for greatness, and we can achieve it by achieving the City we all know is possible. We will do this, by constructing a community for all, by creating a community that is dynamic, inclusive, and beautiful, one that focuses on jobs, justice, and joy, to steal the frame of urban designer, thinker, architect Vishaan Chakrabarti. Chakrabarti recently said, in a talk I observed virtually, that sometimes cities have fallen into the trap of focusing too singularly on job-creation. I

think he's right. Now, that doesn't mean that we back away from the responsibility of doing all we can to foster economic opportunity and security, but it does mean that we should have a broader vision for our community and residents.

On the topic of "jobs" or economic development generally, in spite of the obvious burdens of COVID, which were born disproportionately by our frontline workers and our service and hospitality industry businesses, our community is strong economically and continues to grow stronger each day. Thanks to the recent addition of Director Neil Stechschulte to our Department of Community and Economic Development and the longstanding leadership of Assistant Director Cheryl Renier-Wigg and the great work of their whole team, we are in position to assist with this resurgence.

Within the past few months I've attended numerous ribbon-cuttings and ground-breakings for businesses large and small. Thankfully, we remain a community that is growing in population and economic activity, which we will continue to cultivate by connecting with businesses and individuals who want to invest in Green Bay and offering them the support we have at our disposal, and we've had some good success recently. Earlier this spring I attended the ribbon-cutting at a new Prevea Clinic on our west side, a \$23.1 million clinic near St. Mary's hospital. I also attended the ground-breaking of a new BayCare Orthopedics and Sports Medicine Clinic in our I43 industrial Park, which continues to be an economic development success story. This 130,000 sq. ft.

project will house a consolidated orthopedics and sports medicine operation, but it will also be home to Green Bay Crossfit, a rooftop track, and a number of other businesses to benefit the surrounding residents. Just a mile or so west of our industrial park, you've probably seen work being done to reinvent the East Town Mall. Thanks to owner and developer Garritt Bader and anchor light industrial tenant, American Tent, East Town Mall is experiencing a rebirth. By innovatively repurposing the building for American Tent's expanded manufacturing operation, Garritt and American Tent's owner and CEO, Tony Ehrbar, have made it possible to bring retail back to a site that has suffered from disinterest and disinvestment for quite some time. Oh, and how about that new mill at Green Bay Packaging? This investment, north of \$500 million, is the first new mill to have opened in the state of Wisconsin in over thirty years. They could have gone elsewhere, but they chose Green Bay because of our people, first and foremost, but also because of the collaborative nature of the financial incentives offered to them by our state, our county, and our city, under the leadership of former Mayor Schmitt, former director of Community and Economic Development Kevin Vonck, and our Common Council.

In addition to these exciting business developments, Green Bay's Common Council and Redevelopment Authority also recently approved a couple development agreements that move us toward our goals of continuing to offer additional housing opportunities and urban amenities in our downtown core. These projects in the Shipyard and at the

old Farmers Market parking lot on Monroe Ave. are exciting news for all residents and taxpayers, but this is particularly good news for those of us who continue to believe a vibrant and expanding and inclusive downtown is key to our community's success in the long term. The project at 200 N. Monroe Ave consists of 172 market rate apartments and includes plans for a full-service grocery store and a space for UWGB to house their continuing education programming, financial assistance mentoring, and their Center for Civic Engagement. The Shipyard development which is being led by the team at Merge Urban Development includes 225 apartment units, a restaurant/bar, and public improvements to our west side shoreline, including a boardwalk, floating docks, and a kayak launch. The Merge project, conservatively valued at \$21 million, is the spark we needed to ignite even more interest in and development of South Broadway, an area of our city that has been long-neglected but which has limitless redevelopment opportunities, especially if we are able to relocate the C. Reiss Coal operation.

Ah, yes, our beloved coal piles. Mayors of Green Bay going back 70 years have vowed to move them, so it's a kind of curse to be obligated to make a similar pledge, but I do believe the timing is right now. The former Pulliam Power Plant property is fit for this kind of industrial, port use, which is supported by the current owner: Brown County. Site acquisition was assisted by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Secretary Missy Hughes, and Governor Evers. This level of collaboration is really what makes a prospective relocation possible, in addition to the support of our state and

federal legislators and a willing partner in C. Reiss itself, thanks to the Kroh family's understanding of the need to redevelop our riverfront for the 21st century.

To relocate the operation to an exclusively industrial area and to redevelop the existing location to benefit the residents of one of the most diverse and disadvantaged neighborhoods in the city will be a positive community development. But more than that, it's a recognition, too, that justice needs to be at the heart of this conversation and others.

This desire to inject justice into our politics is what has always inspired my public service, and it animates the recent work of our City, including our recent acquisition of 26.5 acres of land from JBS, plus a \$500,000 donation. They say you're not supposed to look a gift horse in the mouth, but sometimes it's worth a little peek, and it was in this case. When JBS approached the city with the offer of their generous donation, I graciously accepted, but I also asked them if they might part with their unused land. Ultimately, they agreed, which gives us the opportunity to reimagine a corner of our community that has been neglected for too long. We will have a number of conversations with neighborhood residents and stakeholders to inform our redevelopment efforts before any plans are solidified, but at a high level, we would love to see the creation of a destination playground, an urban farm, and a variety of housing options for people of diverse incomes. Taking ownership of a greenfield of this scale,

adjacent to a neighborhood in need of investment is an incredibly unique opportunity, and it's one that we take very seriously.

Shifting back to our community's and country's recent past, few cities were left untouched by the Movement for Black Lives, which reached its peak in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd last spring. Here in Green Bay we were witness to the largest peaceful demonstration this city has ever seen when thousands of people of all ages, races, creeds, and backgrounds joined together in Leicht Park and marched throughout our downtown, raising their voices for peace, and justice, and multi-racial democracy. This was a proud moment for our community, and it's in that spirit that we will continue to push forward.

Our recent work on diversity and inclusion, environmental resilience, and democracy-promotion are some illustrative examples of what it means when we say "justice for all" in Green Bay. In 2020 we hired Raiya Sankari-Diaz, our Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator who has been tasked with staffing our newly created and citizen-led Equal Rights Commission and working on city initiatives and with city staff to create a workplace that's inclusive and a workforce that's reflective of our city's diversity. She has also been instrumental in connecting the City with UWGB's Center for Civic Engagement to develop a Dialogue Series that features discussions on topics such as the diversity within our community's Latino population and a history of policing in Northeast

Wisconsin and its connection to our industrial heritage, as well as an upcoming conversation this fall centered on an indigenous people's history of Northeast Wisconsin. We are doing this work because it makes us a stronger, more cohesive, and better informed organization and City, but we are also engaged in this project because it's the right and just thing to do.

That's also what's driven us to employ our Resiliency Coordinator, Melissa Schmitz, who works within our Department of Public Works and in tandem with our citizen-led Sustainability Commission. She's been with us for about nine months and has accomplished a great deal in a short period of time, including leading projects to benchmark the city's energy usage, increase our solar energy output, implement suggested changes as the result of a Green Infrastructure code audit, draft a city resiliency plan to fight flooding and develop a city climate action plan to do our part to reduce carbon emissions. This work is necessary for all urban communities during this time of climate change, and I'm encouraged by the progress we've made as the result of our dedicated staff and citizens, but I know that we can and must do more in the years ahead.

The work continues to strengthen our democracy as well, which we are well-positioned to do thanks to the leadership of our City Clerk, Celestine Jeffreys. Warped and dishonest portrayals of the fall 2020 election continue to live on in conspiratorial

corners of our politics, but I continue to be immensely proud of the work of our city and community during this time. Recognizing the absolute necessity of offering all eligible voters the chance to participate in our state and federal elections in the fall of 2020, we responded on a number of fronts to the difficulties of the spring election.

We endorsed Alder Dorff's idea to create an Ad Hoc Elections Committee, which included Alders, clerk staff, citizen members, and chief elections inspectors. This group had vital discussions regarding polling locations, poll worker recruitment, and drop box placement and proved helpful in supporting the work of the clerk's office in preparing for and administering the fall election.

In addition, we retained funds from the nonpartisan, nonprofit Center for Tech in Civic Life, thanks to the unanimous support of our Common Council. These grant dollars were used to offer "hazard pay" to poll workers, purchase high-speed tabulators for absentee ballot processing, install drop boxes to increase the convenience of absentee voting and disseminate nonpartisan information about voting options. Additionally, we were able to enhance the inclusivity of our elections by translating voter guides into Spanish, Hmong and Somali and assure the security of the process for voters and poll workers by working with our police department to monitor all polling locations, transport dropbox ballots, and offer security at our central count operation.

These resources served as a lifeline to our community and scores of others around the state of Wisconsin, and the remaining grant dollars will continue to support our work to provide safe and secure opportunities for eligible voters to participate in our elections in the years ahead.

As we look toward this work, we are optimistic about our local community and our democracy, but the health of both won't be taken for granted. Assuring the continued existence of secure, free, and fair elections in the City of Green Bay, modernizing their administration, and improving upon their accessibility and inclusivity will continue to be among our highest priorities.

A robust understanding and appreciation for real democracy will also guide our discussion of how best to use the \$23.7 million federal investment we received as the result of the American Rescue Plan. There are restrictions on how these dollars can be used, and we need to shore up our internal finances before looking outward, but we need and want the citizen input on efforts allowed under federal rules such as improving our environment and fighting flooding, investing in more affordable housing options throughout the city, strengthening and improving the safety of all Green Bay's neighborhoods, spurring economic activity in the neighborhoods and industries hit hardest by COVID, and seeding the arts and culture organizations and creators that bring people to our city and spark joy in our community's life.

And that's the last big piece of the puzzle I'd like to highlight: joy. This might seem like something a city government shouldn't be focused on creating, but I don't share that sentiment. We absolutely need to focus on the basics, but we have no choice other than to walk and chew gum at the same time. Even people as serious as our country's founders understood the importance of happiness. Life and liberty come first, but the pursuit of happiness comes right after in our Declaration of Independence. We, too, prioritize cultivating joy and happiness wherever and whenever possible. The city has been in this business for some time, but we're striving to take things to the next level. Tonight's program featured some fantastic visual and musical artists who represent these priorities, which have been advanced in large part because of the leadership of our Public Arts Commission with the integral work and assistance of Laura Schley, the City's Public Arts Coordinator. We have a proud history here of embracing art and artists from the Civic Symphony to community theater to the the Weidner Center to longstanding festivals like ArtStreet and fairly recent arrivals like Untitledtown, but prior to the creation of the Public Arts Commission in 2016, the city had not made the creation of public art a priority. Artists make art, governments don't, but we can and should fund art to benefit the community. Recently unveiled examples include Brandon Minga's Salva Jelly on Adams St, Dave Windey's giant metal dandelion off University Ave, and the art in our bus stops thanks to the work of Preble High School students. This is great stuff, and I can promise that there's more to come, thanks to the continued

support of our Redevelopment Authority and Common Council and the investment of our private businesses and business improvement districts. Arts and culture investments make positive impacts in our neighborhoods, creating safer and more attractive places, and they're helpful when competing for limited tourist dollars, but I also feel like justifying the utility of art cheapens its value. To me, the value of art is self-evident in its beauty, the fun it indicates and creates, and the joy it sparks. Art is valuable for art's sake, and we will continue to sing its praises and argue for its necessity because our residents appreciate it and deserve it.

Something else our citizens appreciate are the city's parks and programs. We are blessed with parks, big and small, in all corners of our city, and we are fortunate to have a department led by people like Dan Ditscheit and James Andersen who understand the importance of their mission of bringing natural spaces, pools, programming, and kid-friendly and family-focused activities to all our residents. Of course, we can't talk about our city's parks without celebrating Bay Beach Amusement Park. Some people think the happiest place on earth is in some swamp in Florida, but it's really right here on the shores of Green Bay. And it's only getting better. With the boardwalk and fishing pier being constructed next year, as well as the swimmable beach shortly thereafter, we are poised to restore our connection to the Bay and add another incredibly unique and valuable amenity for residents of our city and region. This project has taken many twists

and turns, which happens with any large-scale redevelopment effort, especially when mother nature has something to say about it, but this effort will be worth the wait.

Something else we've had to wait a bit longer to launch than we intended is a Green Bay Conservation Corps. Thanks to the work of my chief of staff, Amaad Rivera-Wagner, and our fantastic parks staff, we have won a planning grant to implement a Conservation Corps which will deploy young people and older residents to improve our parks and natural spaces, planting trees and shrubs, beautifying our city and bettering themselves by gaining knowledge and giving back to our community. This is an exciting new initiative that exemplifies much of what we're trying to create here: a city that recognizes the vitality of our natural spaces and the benefits that accrue to us all when they are cared for and improved and accessible to all.

The accessibility and safety of our public spaces, including our streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, and even our parking spaces is the last item I'll touch on. The one space you will almost never find joy is that space behind a windshield, especially if you're stuck in traffic because the Mason St bridge is up. Driving a car to home and work is a necessity for many of us, but it need not be the only way, and it shouldn't be the ideal of urban design. Our Safe Walk and Bike Plan, which was a collaborative effort developed and approved by the Green Bay School Board and Common Council is a terrific roadmap that calls for us to make more space safe for pedestrians and cyclists to get from point A to

point B. This has proved to be a great starting point for us, but we know that we need to go further, which is why we commissioned a Shared Corridor Vision for our downtown that emphasizes the importance of reclaiming space for art, entertainment, and the safe movement of people outside of motor vehicles. This is the dominant and governing philosophy in nearly all cities that are growing and thriving, and it is the direction we need to go as well. We are fortunate to be a community and region that is gaining population, but we need to harness this growth in a smart way that creates greater density with good, human-focused design. This really is the best way to create a joyous community, a city that's attractive and welcoming to long-time residents and recent arrivals, to visiting football fans and business travelers, to people of all experiences and backgrounds who share a desire to find community in a city that is safe, compassionate, and fun.

So that's what I would like you to remember tonight: jobs, justice, and joy. Helping to create this city that takes these priorities seriously, engaging in this collaborative project is what animates me and motivates so many people to do what we do for this city. I was born and raised in this community. I'm incredibly proud of who we are as a people and what we're capable of, and I know we absolutely have the ability to be an even greater version of our best self.

Green Bay is an exceptional city, in a great state, in an indispensable nation, and I'm very lucky to be your mayor. Thanks so much for joining us.

And before I leave you tonight, I want to take some time to recognize a few people for their work on behalf of our community this past year by designating our Business of the Year, Employee of the Year, and Citizen of the Year. All award-winners represent what's best about Green Bay, and I'm very excited to be able to highlight their contributions to this community with a small token of appreciation.