



City of Lawrence

State of the City Address | April 2013

2012-2013

Lawrence City Commission



Mayor
Robert J. Schumm

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Vice Mayor
Michael Dever

Commissioners
Mike Amyx
Hugh Carter
Aron Cromwell

City Manager
David L. Corliss

This address is a culmination of several dozen meetings and hundreds of hours worth of discussion, debate and deliberation about community priorities and the future of Lawrence. I have immensely enjoyed the opportunity - again - of being Mayor of the City of Lawrence. I appreciate that our community placed their trust in me to carry out this incredibly important job and I thank my fellow City Commissioners for their support as we faced challenging discussions this year.

The past 12 months have been filled with questions about our capacity as a city to accomplish certain projects. We have addressed this previously but I want to reiterate that the City of Lawrence has a strong financial ability to carry out and fund projects that other cities cannot. Our city has tightly managed our financial portfolio by making decisions, over many years, to keep expenditures in check and utilize our revenues

to create opportunities that other cities simply cannot afford to do given the challenging national economy. Our bond rating is excellent – Aa1 – which signifies that our organization has a very strong capacity to meet our financial commitments. Our city has saved and invested over many years to create reserves that place us in a financially secure position. The city has, in cash and investments, \$120 million which puts the city in good shape to embark on some very exciting and necessary projects that will take Lawrence well into the future.

Business & Industrial Park Development



Our Commission has been a part of numerous projects that will make an impact on our community:

The **Farmland Redevelopment Project** is a major commitment to the future of our community. The city is now in the process of constructing nearly \$7 million worth of infrastructure at the site which is the next step in preparing the site to welcome new businesses, and/or existing companies looking for expansion, to Lawrence. A traffic signal at 23rd and O’Connell Road will improve access to the site as well as enhances the flow of traffic on K-10 for residents and commuters.



City of Lawrence

The **Lawrence Public Library** is now officially under construction. Voters previously approved the \$18-million bond issue to finance the expansion and renovation of our much-beloved Library. This expansion addressed numerous needs at the Library including expanded children's space and additional downtown parking.

The City Commission has made a commitment to partner with Kansas Athletics to develop **Rock Chalk Park**. This project will provide the city with a recreation center which addresses our need for additional indoor gymnasium space and other recreational amenities including a walking track, outdoor trails and space for additional programming as well as eight illuminated tennis courts. This project leverages the ability for our community to bring numerous partners together to create a project that will be second-to-none in the area and brings the city and the University of Kansas together to meet common goals.

Another project that will be incredibly positive for our community is the **South Lawrence Trafficway**. The Kansas Department of Transportation is moving forward with this much-anticipated transportation project which will link Manhattan, Topeka, Lawrence and the communities of Johnson County. The completion of the K-10 transportation corridor is vital to supporting commerce, education, research, and culture for these communities as well as the State of Kansas. KDOT projects that the SLT will have a regional economic benefit of \$3.7 billion - the greatest economic benefit of any project under KDOT's T-WORKS program. Once completed, Lawrence and Douglas County will have three completed highways which provide critical transportation links and are essential for creating the economic programs and projects that will enhance the quality of life of our community by bringing new jobs and new opportunities for our residents.

Lawrence Public Library Renovation & Expansion



Rock Chalk Park & Recreation Center



South Lawrence Trafficway





Our Commission has made commitments to neighborhoods and city infrastructure:

This spring and summer, the city is investing millions in the **reconstruction of Iowa Street**, from Irving Hill to Harvard, and the intersection of Bob Billings Parkway and 15th Street. An additional center turn lane is being added to improve the safety of this roadway and improve traffic flow in the area. A new southbound turn lane will be added on westbound Sixth Street at Iowa to keep traffic flowing on this busy corridor and is a much-anticipated improvement to our street infrastructure.

Just recently, the City Commission approved a **multi-million dollar plan for our water and wastewater systems**. This is a long-term commitment to provide state-of-the-art water and wastewater systems. Additionally, we’re looking at how to improve our quality of services and develop infrastructure that can responsibly handle our current and future capacity and are committed to looking at ways to reduce the taste and odor issues that our residents report at certain times of the year. By making plans now to complete the Wakarusa Wastewater Treatment Facility our community will be able to entertain proposals from businesses and industries that have extraordinary water and wastewater capacity needs.

Additionally this year, we saw the completion of the first phase of the **Poehler Lofts Project in the Warehouse Arts District**. This mixed-use development is a great example of how the city and private developers can work together to create a project that benefits neighborhoods and our community as a whole. Poehler Lofts is a revitalization project that is generating state and national attention due to its use of private, municipal, state and national resources to complete a phenomenal project that was filled to capacity within 24 hours of opening.

Poehler Lofts



There are many other projects we’ve touched this year that will benefit our community well into the future. To name a few, KDOT announced the Bob Billings Parkway and K-10 Interchange as a future improvement that will be a direct benefit to employees working at Kansas University. The new hotel and apartments planned at the intersection of Ninth and New Hampshire will provide more living units in downtown which will, in turn, support additional retail activity in downtown Lawrence.

Our Commission has made commitments to enhance the quality of life for all residents:

Oread Lighted Path



Strong communities plan for the future. Thriving communities focus on future growth while creating programs that enhance our quality of life. Transportation for all residents is important to our community and we now have a **Complete Streets policy** which establishes guiding principles and practices to create a safe, equitable, balanced, and effective transportation system that encourages walking, bicycling, and transit use, to improve health and reduce environmental impacts. Our transit system continues to improve their service by implementing changes which increase access to the University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University and make the best use of resources available.



Creating a sustainable community is another priority the City Commission has taken time to address over the past year. Recently, we took the first major step toward creating a **single-stream, curbside recycling program** that will provide our residents with the most comprehensive and easy-to-use system to recycle materials that would otherwise go to a landfill. Also this year, the city initiated its first **Common Ground** community garden plots. Over 640 volunteers participated in the community gardens and over 5,800 pounds of produce were grown with 550 pounds of produce donated to local food banks. The Common Ground program provided neighborhoods with access to fresh, healthy produce and served as an educational tool for residents to learn about composting and gardening. Our intention is to continue to expand this program into more residential neighborhoods in future years.



For the past two years, the City Commission has provided **additional public safety patrol officers** and we've heard from our community that it is time to evaluate whether or not there is a need for an updated and combined police facility. The safety and security of our residents is paramount and we will continue this discussion as we continue to evaluate our community priorities.

Bioscience & Technology Business Center



Our Commission has made commitments to be a partner with other organizations:

The city's commitment to the **Bioscience and Technology Business Center** at KU's West Campus is an excellent example of academic resources, governmental interest and business acumen joining forces to grow our local economy. In the first few years of operation, the BTBC has created over 71 jobs and filled their current facility to capacity with nine tenants. The city, county, university and BTBC are now working to expand this facility and welcome more businesses and new jobs to Lawrence. As an organization, we will continue to seek out

ways to partner with Kansas University and strengthen both of our organizations through mutually beneficial projects and planning efforts.

This year we've seen the completion of the **Lawrence Community Shelter's** new facility in southeast Lawrence. It is heartwarming to know that we now have a humane place for people to go and be given the opportunity to re-create their lives and receive training that will provide a way out of poverty and help them take steps toward a brighter future.

I strongly believe that this year has been filled with excellent dialogue and communication amongst citizens, staff and the City Commission. I think this is evident given the number of unanimous votes we've had over the year. Our community's trust in my ability to serve as Mayor is incredibly important and was not taken lightly. Each decision made this year — regardless of resounding favor or substantial opposition — was made with the community's best interest at heart.

I consider it an honor to have served as your Mayor,