



MADISON

Indiana
Office of the Mayor

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, city council, and fellow citizens, thank you for joining me today for our annual State of the City address. I want to thank our students for being here and leading us in the pledge of allegiance. There is no greater investment we can make than in their futures!

Each year, it is my honor to update you on how our city is doing. This is where we align our vision with our actions to improve public safety, economic opportunity, and quality of life. I am here to declare that on the heels of a great 2023, 2024 will be a phenomenal year. And I will share with you why I believe this to be true.

Madison is not just a city but a living testament to our shared history and collective future. Today, I want to discuss the crucial role of investment, particularly through public-private partnerships, in preserving and enhancing the beauty, safety, and cleanliness of Madison.

As you know, Madison's rich history dates back to its founding in 1809, and its significance in shaping our nation's story cannot be overstated. From its early days as a bustling river port with dozens of industries to its role in the Underground Railroad and its transformation into a regional destination, Madison has witnessed the ebb and flow of time.

Today, as we look to the future, we must recognize the importance of responsible investment in ensuring that Madison remains a place where history lives and breathes. That is why our multifaceted investment approach toward historic preservation and telling our story is so critical.

I could not be prouder of our accomplishments in beautifying our city. Last year, over \$4.4 million of mostly private capital was invested through our PACE program, addressing blight and bringing dilapidated and dangerous structures back to life. The ratio of private capital to local dollars is 5:1, which is a great return on investment. As promised, we revitalized Gaines Park on Broadway Street, worked with private property owners who invested millions in the Walnut Street Corridor, held grand openings at Oak Hill and the Shoppes at Sunrise Crossing, and we are developing a master plan for Crooked Creek Flood mitigation. And in just a few short months, we will see even more investment in revitalizing our neighborhoods, such as the Pinehurst area, where we are developing a small single-family subdivision with Habitat for Humanity.

We spend a lot of time discussing placemaking with our projects. Placemaking is a concept that creates and enhances public spaces to improve the quality of life in a community. When people are added, public spaces become alive, promoting social interaction and vibrancy. Whether it's parks, public safety, infrastructure, historic preservation, blight elimination, community amenities, or many other things, placemaking is community building or, as I like to say, people-making. When people come first, results happen. My team and I always bring new solutions to old problems and confront them head-on.

Tonight, I will discuss many different topics, but I want to make sure everyone knows how dedicated our city staff and employees are and how hard they work daily to deliver on our promises to you. I want to ask them to stand up and be recognized.

Speaking of results, we are excelling in almost every area: historic economic development investment, a growing economy, low unemployment, record tourism, and the largest investments on our riverfront in Madison's history, to name a few.

Notice I said "almost every area"? One of the lagging metrics that will impact our future is the health of our community. Communities like Madison have not adequately invested in health, but that's starting to change. Out of 92 counties, we are #65 in life expectancy, #25 in obesity, #44 in infant mortality, and #90 in smoking, and only 19 counties have a worse suicide rate than ours. We have to do better!

Creating healthier outcomes is a formidable task, but with more investment, everything is possible. Our partnerships make the difference, and so will the right level of investment. Governor Holcomb's collaboration with our legislature led the way to unprecedented funding for local health departments, which will invest more in core services, education, nutrition, and substance abuse awareness programs. I was honored to be a member of Governor Holcomb's public health commission and was very proud when Jefferson County opted into the plan and committed to a healthier community.

Speaking of the value of relationships, our collaboration with Governor Holcomb's office is bringing much-needed funding to our public health and economic development initiatives, such as READI. Our collaboration with Lt. Gov. Crouch's office has also brought millions of dollars to Madison for Stellar and our Crystal Beach restoration. Thank you to them for their leadership and support.

One of our new partners is transforming Madison. With support from the Bethany Legacy Foundation, Chief Scudder and MPD implemented the PASS program (Police Advocacy and Support Services). PASS will provide crucial mental health care for our police officers. We recently put this plan into action and included first responders from our volunteer fire departments as well. We have to care for those who care for us. Thank you, Dora.

The city is using its opioid settlement funds to develop a new substance use disorder program in the Jefferson County Jail in partnership with Commissioners Bramer, Lee, and Little, Sheriff Flint, and Lauren Perryman from Lifespring. This is one of our top priorities for 2024.

We live in a caring community where partnerships pay dividends. Thank you, Jefferson County Suicide Prevention, Kindness Jefferson County, the Freedom Center, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Bethany Legacy Foundation, JRAC, CASA, CAC, the Boys and Girls Club, Girls, Inc., and Recovery Cafe to name a few for bringing solutions to our community healthcare needs.

The heart of any thriving community is its economy, and public-private partnerships play a pivotal role in fostering economic growth. Madison's unique charm, with its well-preserved 19th-century architecture and picturesque landscapes, has the potential to attract both residents and tourists alike. By strategically partnering with private investors, we can revitalize key areas, create job opportunities, and promote sustainable economic development.

Two such initiatives are the redevelopment of the riverfront and Sunrise Crossing. The Ohio River has been the lifeblood of Madison since its inception, and enhancing this waterfront not only preserves our heritage but also provides an opportunity for economic rejuvenation. Through public-private partnerships, we can develop riverfront spaces that offer recreational activities, waterfront dining, and cultural events. These ventures not only boost the local economy but also provide a platform for the community to come together and enjoy the natural beauty that surrounds us.

We have made historic investments that make Madison's riverfront the jewel of the Ohio River. If you are one of the 1.7 million people strolling on our riverfront boardwalk each year, you will see our investment in Heritage Trail, Crystal Beach, the Brown Gym, the new Costigan Park, and the super overlook, as well as improvements to our campground and the Bridge Gateway. You will also enjoy Chautauqua, Regatta, River Rat Rodz Car Show, Music in the Park, Public Art, dining, Rockin Thunder boat tours, the Fairfield Inn, parks, camping, and so much more!

This year, we will make additional investments in public art, Bicentennial Park, and the upgrades to the Damon Welch Park that we have been planning. Our riverfront will be even more awesome!

When you think about Madison's prosperity, you have to appreciate the collaborations with the Community Foundation, Bethany Legacy Foundation, Chamber of Commerce, Madison Main Street, Madison Area Arts Alliance, Madison Music Movement, Visit Madison, Inc., JCBT, Riverfront Development Corporation, the hundreds of volunteers, and all of the businesses and industry who are investing in Madison! Through these collaborations, we have generated over \$200 million in new investments across the city in the past year or so.

One successful example is the Shoppes at Sunrise Crossing, a national retail center that had almost 500,000 visits in the first six months of opening the Shoppes. This development would not have happened without CRM Development believing in Madison. We are so grateful to Craig Turner and Garyen Denning for their faith in us. Whether it's commercial, industrial, small business, or the city's transportation-related networks, such as the Madison Railroad and Madison Municipal Airport, there are many examples where new investment is creating amazing outcomes.

However, economic prosperity alone is not enough. A thriving community must also be a safe and secure one. Madison has a strong tradition of civic engagement, and it's this spirit that we can harness to enhance public safety. By investing in modernizing our law enforcement infrastructure, implementing new community policing strategies, and fostering dialogue between residents and law enforcement, we can ensure that Madison is safe for all. In 2023, MPD responded to over 11,000 calls, issued over 1,000 citations, and invested over 3,100 hours of training. Taking drug dealers off the street is priority number one, and last year, we saw a decline in drug-related crimes. I am so grateful for the leadership and support of Chief Scudder and Major Mundt with MPD and Chief Washer and the command staff, including Bill Devries, Jeremy Cornelius, and Travis Conover at MFD.

The Madison Fire Department responded to 327 emergencies and logged almost 1,600 hours of training. Our Street Department drove over 3,300 miles, clearing roads during snow events and processing over 11,000 tons of trash and recycling from the community. The city of Madison utilities kept the water flowing, over 880 million gallons of it, to be precise, last year, on top of managing a major \$13 million improvement project with updates to our treatment, distribution, and storage systems. Don't you agree with me that our city staff is not only essential, but they are irreplaceable?

Public safety is a very comprehensive and tactical area that also involves policy matters such as how to calm traffic, create safer speeding levels, improve parking in the dense parts of Madison, repair aging sidewalks, and build better roads that facilitate more than just traffic movement. In 2023, with over 8.4 miles of roads paved and 20 blocks of new sidewalks, we have made great strides toward making Madison a safer community for all modes of travel.

I have to give a shout-out to our tourism partners for their collaboration and success in 2023. I believe Lucy Dattilo and Andrew Forrester are here tonight. With visitors reaching an all-time high, tourism

spending is up 17% to over \$60 million, with a direct economic impact of over \$20 million. Of every dollar spent by visitors here, 46 cents stayed local. Our investments in improved wayfinding and staffing the comfort station have added to Madison's visitor experience.

I look forward to working with JCBT and VMI on capital plans for the upcoming year to grow tourism even more. Every investment we make toward our destination plan also benefits our city and county residents.

Before discussing what 2024 holds, let me discuss the city's financial condition. Our city finances are unique because of the businesses we are involved with, such as utilities, the airport, and general operations. Of the approximately \$14 million annual general operating budget increasing to about \$22 million when including utilities, only \$7 million is funded through property tax revenue. The balance is funded through utility fees and other revenue, such as local income taxes and monies from the state for motor vehicles, excise taxes, user fees, and TIF revenues.

As we discussed tonight, we have made significant investments in public safety, i.e., growing our Madison Police Department, eliminating blight with financial incentives and full-time code enforcement, and pursuing major economic development and placemaking investments such as Sunrise Crossing, the new DG Market, our Gateway improvements, and upgrading our water infrastructure with a major investment of \$13 million, for example. We have done this while keeping debt obligations and property tax rates low.

The city ended the year with \$15.6 million in cash, just one long-term general obligation liability of \$4.9 million, and a relatively flat property tax rate of \$1.29 for the city taxpayers (before the caps). Unlike the federal government, we are required to operate with a balanced budget, and our property tax rate growth trends have been far below inflation, at just a 1.85% annual average over the past four budget cycles.

What does that mean to the average property taxpayer? With all of the investment growth we have seen in Madison, your property taxes have gone up just 2.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value on average over the past four years. How is that for a great return on your investment? We work very hard to bring value to our residents, and this is done with public-private partnerships and private capital attraction, as well as literally turning pennies into millions of dollars. Claims on the city's funds are paid from appropriations every two weeks, and the city's credit history is excellent. We are constantly looking for ways to operate more efficiently, and there is an opportunity to implement better methods to facilitate that goal.

So, what is around the corner? I'd like to simply say MORE. Some would ask, what's left to do? The answer to that is also "MORE"!

2024 will be phenomenal because we will be completing many significant projects currently underway, beginning new initiatives that are needed, and constantly laying the groundwork for key initiatives that will take several more years to complete. Every year is a building block, and our momentum is strong!

With our Workforce and Destination Madison plans already in place, we will continue to break new ground on our challenges and have many groundbreakings to celebrate our accomplishments. I am very much looking forward to: the opening of Crystal Beach Aquatic Park, the new DG Market, completion of our \$13 million water project, beginning of the \$1.7 million TSO Modernization Plan, construction of the \$19.2 million Phase 1 of Residences at Sunrise Crossing, our \$12 million Clifty Drive project in partnership with INDOT that will include sidewalks, improved stormwater management and traffic safety, the restoration of the Ohio Theater façade in partnership with the Friends of the Ohio, planning for a new runway at the airport, getting the Hanover-Madison Connector Trail started, installing the River's Edge sculpture at our new gateway, celebrating Madison's industrial, architectural and UGRR history at Costigan Park, installing

the new streets and sidewalks in our arts and entertainment corridor, advancing improvements at the Damon Welch Park on our riverfront and implementing READI 2.0 which is going to include pursuing a permanent stage at Bicentennial Park to advance our brand as Indiana's Music City, working with the Riverfront Development Committee for Phase Three of the overlook project, working on Phase Two of our gateway project that has turned a dilapidated area into a destination gateway which will eventually include illuminating the bridge, and most importantly, an intense focus on bringing long overdue solutions to Madison urgent need for housing.

In partnership with Winterwood Development and financing from ICHDA, Residences at Sunrise Crossing will be the first multi-family housing development on Madison's hilltop in 30 years! All the developments I mentioned will bring millions of new investments to Madison.

Now, this brings me to Project 2424. I did not say 2024. Project 2424 represents 24 key initiatives this year. My staff thinks one initiative a month is ambitious! But we aspire to bring solutions, and don't the results speak for themselves?

In addition to the projects I mentioned previously, we have to invest in policymaking that makes a difference. Many of the city's ordinances were passed over 30 years ago. In my first four years, we introduced 75 ordinances, all of which were approved by the city council. Thank you, council.

The key to good results begins with good policy. So, what types of policies will we be addressing this year? Just this week, we approved an ordinance that paves the way for the TSO Modernization Plan, which involves how we manage our solid waste and recycling efforts in Madison. Over the balance of the year, we will implement the city's largest investment in keeping our community clean since 1985. Because of the safety and health risks associated with manually handling over 7 million pounds of waste each year, this initiative is critical for our staff.

Another major policy initiative involves vacant and abandoned properties. This is an extension of our ongoing blight elimination efforts. Unfortunately, financial incentives are not enough for some property owners, and accountability has been lacking for decades. That is why we have addressed over 900 nuisance cases in two years and have identified well over 100 unsafe properties in various stages of deterioration across the city. Blight is never right!

This spring, working with our building and planning staff, we will introduce an ordinance to the city council that will create a registration process for vacant and abandoned properties. No longer will these property owners escape the consequences of blighting our neighborhoods for decades without a financial impact. Our goal is not to punish property owners but to strongly encourage them to maintain their properties at a level that benefits the majority who are following well-established property maintenance standards.

Other initiatives included in Project 2424 will be establishing a master plan for the Crooked Creek Watershed Flood Mitigation. We have already invested over \$1.2 million in this effort and just recently entered into a contract to develop strategies to reduce inundation from large precipitation events in the north Walnut Street area of our historic district. This effort will save lives and reduce property damage in the future. It will not eliminate flood risk but mitigate the severity of future disasters. And time is of the essence.

We are well on our way to creating a stormwater master plan and updates to our comprehensive plan so that we can envision the Madison of the Future.

Another area that is not talked about often is modernizing public safety. We need to develop a plan that envisions what fire safety in Madison will look like over the next quarter century. What we don't manage, manages us, and we must be prepared to lead Madison into the future.

And speaking of good policy, I am proud of Madison's relationship with Jefferson County and the Town of Hanover. We collaborate on so many things; without that collaboration, our combined efforts on public safety and economic development would not be as effective as they are now.

Other policy initiatives will involve updating our zoning ordinance, which is critical to our future city planning efforts, working with Ball State's Rural Policy Institute regarding the comprehensive community wealth approach to community amenities, finalizing the East End traffic calming initiatives, and working with implementing a very important program in the new jail called JCAP, which will bring hope to inmates experiencing substance use disorders. This and so much more are needed to improve the quality of life for all Madisonians. I could share all 24 initiatives of our 2424 plan with you, but that would take another hour!

Implementing this vision would not be possible without the hundreds of volunteers serving on boards and committees across the city. If you serve on any of these boards, please stand. And our representatives at the state house are very important to Madison's future.

In closing, the journey toward a more beautiful and thriving Madison requires a collective effort. Public-private partnerships serve as the catalyst for positive change, bringing together the strengths of both sectors to create a thriving community. Investment is the currency that helps our community grow. Together, let us answer the question about our vision for our community, and then let's go out and do it! If we believe it, we can achieve it! Madison's future is bright, and I am honored to be Madison's Mayor!

Thank you, and God Bless Madison.