

2018 State of the City Address

Mayor Gabriel Greer

March 20, 2018



Thank you all for coming to the State of the City address tonight. As Mayor of Peru I do not often look back on what has been accomplished. There are too many challenges facing the City to spend much time looking back. However, tonight is the time for reflection on our accomplishments.

The City of Peru is financially strong and the City Clerk-Treasurer reported that the City's General Fund has grown over the past two years, as general spending has declined. This account has improved over \$700,000 in this time span. The Clerk-Treasurer's goals include keeping City spending in check and reviewing investment policies to generate money for the City. These goals will allow the office to reach their overall goal of providing essential services to Peru city residents and improve the quality of place in Peru.

The Peru Common Council passed 28 ordinances and 15 resolutions in 2017 working with the City administration to pass balanced budgets and tackle a wide range of issues.

The Building Department made great strides in completing the Blight Elimination Grant program last year, demoing 17 properties and taking down an additional 12 with City Unsafe Building funds. The City also saw 300 properties cleaned up and improved by either homeowners or violations crews.

The City's Street Department spread over a ton of salt and sand on streets during the past Winter to keep roadways safe and manageable for drivers, completed six sidewalk

replacement projects, picked up over 600 bulky items adding almost \$9,000 to City coffers, and paved 5.8 miles of road lane. The department also completed an underpass project aimed at preventing pigeons from roosting and maintaining a common nuisance to school children and pedestrians on a heavily used walkway in town.

The City's Law Department began work on the Ordinance Update Project. This project aimed to eliminate outdated and unnecessary ordinances, and actually received national media attention for getting rid of the "fluff and nonsense." Many ordinances were also amended to reflect current departmental policies.

The Traffic Department completed 27 miles of road striping, constructed bike racks from repurposed materials to be installed in downtown Peru this year, and replaced 99 street signs. The Traffic department also performed two major intersection changes, including an all-way stop at Fremont Street and West 7th Street, and an all-way stop to replace the automatic signal system at Washington Avenue and Water Street, thus saving the City \$20,000 in traffic light maintenance. The traffic department also saved the City over \$20,000 by working with the Mayor's office and other departments to repurpose vehicles already owned by the City.

The Peru Police Department received over \$50,000 in grants, with one grant allowing the department to purchase AEDs so all officers are now equipped. The department also continued once again in Operation Pullover, making for a total of 24 years in the

program. As a department, the overdose drug narcan was administered seven times to save lives in the community. Police K9s were used over 250 times throughout the year, arrests were up by 45%, charges were up by 47%, and there was a slight 5% decrease in traffic warnings written, with a total of over 18,000 calls for service made. For the detective division, 40 narcotics arrests were made, and 79 narcotics charges were filed.

Nearly 550 animal related calls were made to dispatch, with 140 dogs taken into the Peru Animal Control shelter in 2017. Peru Animal control also collaborated with community volunteers and the Purdue spay-neuter clinic to spay or neuter 23 shelter dogs and 75 feral cats in 2017.

The Parks Department assisted with the set up and clean up for popular Parks events including Relay for Life, the annual Independence Day celebration, Easter egg hunt, and the chili cook-off. All park pavilions were also painted throughout the year to give the Parks a brighter look, and over 150 park picnic tables were refurbished.

Within the Peru Fire Department, 2017 was a year of transition, with many hires and position changes within the Peru Fire Department, including a sixth of the department retiring early in 2018 and a new chief being appointed. There were over 1450 department runs, with 60 fire runs, and over 1000 rescue/EMS runs. The inspection department was busy as well, with 15 fire investigations, 250 code enforcement inspections, and 150 general inspections. The department reached over 350 kids through Fire prevention week and gave 8 station tours throughout the year as well.

If I had to sum up last year in one sentence it would be, “A community coming together.” In my speech tonight I do not mention any individuals even though there are many all-stars I could mention; people that have worked hard and have done so much for our city in the last year. The City has made huge strides in numerous areas, but the commonality in all of these successes has been partnerships. Individuals and groups of people have come together to make our city better and I hope that the people listening tonight get a sense of just how much cooperation has taken place within the city to make the lives of our people better.

The biggest example of partnership this last year may be the partnership between the City, the Miami County YMCA, MCEDA, the Nickelplate Trail, and a number of board members throughout the county to announce the Riverview Landing Project, which will be the home of the new Miami County YMCA. Situated along the banks of the Wabash River, the first phase will see the development of new YMCA campus stretching along 10 acres of the river front property. This phase will also include the Riverwalk expansion across the length of the Riverview Landing development and into the West City Park. This extension of existing trails will connect to the Nickelplate Trail to our beautiful downtown, with the 16 mile stretch of the Nickelplate trail reaching all the way to Kokomo. This project represents a large, multi-organization collaboration that will serve as a huge economic driver for our community. It will draw new housing, improved infrastructure, and amenities upgrades, such as new parking at West City Park, the extension of the Riverwalk, and the possibility of new parks and businesses in the area.

Our downtown is getting better every day, and that is in large part due to the efforts of another partnership in the City. ReDiscover Downtown Peru is funded by both the City and MCEDA and has given out dozens of grants to downtown businesses to help fix up buildings and bring business back to downtown Peru. Rediscover Downtown Peru has also started the wildly successful “Second Saturday” festivities downtown. For example, in November there were free horse drawn carriage rides, and in the City’s first Second Saturday event, citizens came to the Courthouse lawn to see a City Police Dog attack the Mayor! The Second Saturday events have had great success at bringing people back in to our downtown and supporting our downtown business.

Of course we still have much more to do as a City to get our downtown looking great again. The City has owned the building at 20 East 5th for a number of years, and last year the city implemented the Key Building Program with MCEDA. Partnering with local entrepreneurs, the City is in the final steps of approving the plans for a new business to remodel the building and start serving customers next year. Last year the City also took on the eyesore at the heart of our downtown, 1 South Broadway. This massive three story downtown building was entangled in the legal morass of a protracted criminal case. The hurdles to addressing the building were immense; courts had frozen the assets of the owner including the building, state liens were attached to the building, along with mortgage. Piece by piece the City was able to get through multiple levels of bureaucracy, negotiations, and financial appropriations to acquire the building. Immediately the City started work on the building, installing a new roof to preserve the

structural integrity of the building. City workers have also worked to stabilize the interior of the building and are in the process of putting work out to bid to finish fixing the outside of the building. This will turn the property from an eyesore to a centerpiece of our downtown. The building at 1 South Broadway is also part of the City's Key Building Program and is moving forward in its process of acquiring a developer to invest in the building and therefore bring new business to the downtown.

Last winter the City's Traffic Department took materials no longer used by the City and made bike racks to place downtown and compliment the newly painted bike paths. The Traffic Department is working with Rediscover Downtown Peru to place these bike racks along with new benches, trees, and planters throughout the downtown area.

The City's Bike Path Committee was also able to present a plan for bike lanes to the Indiana Department of Transportation to be implemented as part of the resurfacing work done by the state. The state took the plans and agreed to put the bike lanes in as part of the project at no cost to the City, and therefore added 4,600 feet of two way bike lanes to the City of Peru.

The City is also taking on the project of expanding the Nickel Plate Trail, expanding from the Lovers Lane trail headed South into town. The extension will connect the new athletic fields being built by Peru Schools to the Nickel Plate trail and extend the trail down to 9th Street.

The City has had its share of bad news in the last year as well. Layoffs by local manufacturers and a continuing battle with the opioid epidemic has taken its toll on our community. However, the City is being proactive in addressing these problems. MCEDA and the City have been in communication with other manufacturers and plan to announce good-paying manufacturing jobs coming to Peru that will more than make up for the numbers lost. The City is also active in its partnership with the Systems Of Care Governance Coalition to combat the opioid issues. For example, the Life Cycle Program developed by our local SOCGC has been an unprecedented success. Bicycles collected by the City of Peru Police Department are taken to our local bike shop downtown and fixed for a small fee paid for by our local Peru Lions Club and Tri Kappa Sorority. The bikes are then taken, stored, and distributed by Main Street Methodist Church to the needy in our community. The program has been so successful that it has already spread to other communities in Indiana, and the Coalition Director has been asked to go to Washington D.C. and speak to a national audience about implementing the program nationwide. The City has partnered again with SOCGC and the non-profit Advantage Housing to help address homelessness and housing in Peru. The City continues to aggressively address unsafe and nuisance properties in Peru and in the process has worked with the County Commissioners to acquire problem properties. Some of these properties have been donated to Advantage Housing to be rehabbed and used in programs to help people without homes gain a place to call their own.

We are tackling problems as a community, and as a community we are finding solutions and implementing them. Our future is bright— As long as we we continue to

work together. So I invite everyone in our community to get involved and be a part of these exciting times.

And, again thank you to everyone for coming tonight and I look forward to working with you in 2018.