

Mayor Pete Buttigieg: State of the City

March 20, 2013

LaSalle Intermediate School

Before the address, I ask that we observe a moment of silence for those killed and injured in Sunday's tragic plane crash in our city. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by the tragedy.

Clerk Voorde, President Dieter and Council Officers and Members, colleagues and citizens: good evening.

I would like to begin by thanking Principal Boyd and LaSalle Intermediate School for hosting this occasion. We are very proud of LaSalle, a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School. This honor came to just 8 schools, private and public, across the whole state of Indiana in 2012, and LaSalle is the only intermediate school in our state so honored. This is a big deal: this kind of success, right here on the West Side of South Bend, shows real excellence in public education in our city. Whether it's good things going on at LaSalle, the defending national-championship mock trial team at Adams, the state Four Star School award going to Hamilton Traditional, Kennedy Primary Academy and LaSalle, national magnet awards for Dickinson and Marquette, or the fact that South Bend had more Indiana Teachers of the Year than any school district in the state, we as a community need to take pride in the achievements of our public schools, in addition to our excellent private and parochial options.

While the school system falls outside the purview of city government, it is incumbent on the administration, and on all of us, to recognize and celebrate these successes and support the hard work that Superintendent Dr. Carole Schmidt and the School Board are doing to elevate education in our community.

Introduction: three ingredients for action

In late 2010, when Mayor Luecke announced that he would not seek another term, it was clear to all of us that the community was in for a transitional period. In the first open-seat election in 24 years in our city, we knew that serious change was on the way, with all the cause for hope and uncertainty that this brings. The last fifteen months have demonstrated that the election and installation of the new administration represented the beginning, not the end, of that transition.

The first year of this administration has been a period of growth, change, renewal, and challenge for our city. We have been through a lot, together, in 2012, and that process of change is still underway. But if 2012 was a year of building, of groundwork, of transition and emergence, 2013 has already shown itself to be a year of action.

Action requires three ingredients: leadership, resources, and purpose. It takes a team capable of delivering, the resources to deliver with, and a clear set of priorities on what it is we will deliver.

First, the team: our first order of business—one that continued well beyond the official transition period—was to establish and situate the team that could lead this city at full speed. If this administration is to be criticized for taking time filling key positions, I hope it will also be recognized that we have assembled one of the most qualified and high-achieving leadership teams ever to serve in our city’s government.

Our approach has been simple: set an extremely high bar, and find the best person to do the job, whoever and wherever he or she is. Look for local talent and find in South Bend, but also don’t be afraid to bring the best to South Bend in order to serve.

The majority of our leadership team comes from within our community, drawn from the public and private sectors, and chosen for their ability to creatively and strategically guide our departments forward.

Others are new to our community, and our most high-profile recent job placement, that of new Police Chief Ron Teachman, is a case in point for our approach to leadership. To make sure this search was done right, we conducted a town hall on community priorities, and advertised both locally and nationally, drawing over sixty job applicants for this position. I wanted to be certain that both inside and outside candidates had a fair chance to compete. Then we set up a committee of respected local citizens in addition to one state and one national law enforcement expert, to interview candidates and identify finalists. In a rigorous evaluation process, one name rose to the top, and Chief Teachman is the kind of leader who has the experience and aptitude to bring the significant reforms that are needed in

the police department, providing the leadership our officers and community need and deserve.

But this is just one example. In every department, and in the mayor's office, I have set exceptionally high expectations, drawn and retained exceptionally capable leaders. These leaders are helping me to establish the organizational culture of this administration: high-tempo, creative, innovative and people-oriented.

In addition to people, action requires resources. It is now 2013, the first year that this administration and Council are operating in a budget of our own design, born of a thorough process that spanned the better part of last year and included over a dozen meetings, open to the public, in which we aligned our priorities and made tough choices. It was not easy. Like any government or business or family in these times, we are learning to do more without being able to count on an increase in revenues. Through 2012, we undertook an exhaustive, exceptionally inclusive and transparent budget process, led by City Controller Mark Neal and Common Council Personnel and Finance Committee chair Karen White. Today, we are working with budget priorities established by means of intensive dialogue between the new administration and the new Council.

And third, no matter how good your team and how strong your resources, in order to take action you must have clarity of purpose. Last year, honing and refining priorities established throughout community conversations of 2011, our shared purpose and mission came into even clearer view. The goal

remains as simple as it is challenging: to ensure that South Bend is a safe, well-connected community where everyone can thrive.

The path to getting there is guided by three major priorities for the administration. First: making sure the basics are easy for citizens. Second: providing good government. And third: getting everyone back to work. Guided by these three administrative priorities, our administration and our city are now moving full steam ahead. There is not time tonight to share more than a small fraction of the work we have done, but it is important that citizens get a sense of what we have achieved and where we are headed—and why.

Making sure the basics are easy

To best explain this first goal—making sure the basics of life are easy for our citizens—it’s helpful to think not in terms of government, but in terms of people.

Every day, we all encounter different kinds of people who together make up the life of this city. Think of Tera, the young woman who called our office looking for resources for her kids, ages 4, 5, and 7, kids she is raising on her own while seeking work and ensuring there is a roof over their heads. She has enough to worry about without having to wonder how to get a glass of clean, safe, drinking water for her kids.

Think of Jonathan, the young man who is interning in our code enforcement department, and has worked two jobs to put himself through school so he

can succeed in his chosen path as an entrepreneur—he is a first-generation American making his way toward a very bright future, and he has enough on his plate without having to wonder if there is an adequate road to get him between his home, two jobs, and school.

Think of some of the seniors in this community, retired but active, drawing pleasure from volunteering and giving back to our community. She shouldn't have to wonder whose job it is to do something if her burglar alarm goes off.

City government provides those things that people literally cannot live without—from drinking water to police protection—as they go about their lives. Our vision is to provide these basics of life so well, so seamlessly, that citizens can take them for granted and focus on what's really important in their lives.

This takes major effort behind the scenes. No one will ever call 311, and say “I just wanted to say thank you to everyone at the water works for the glass of clean, safe drinking water that came out of my faucet this morning.” But it matters that our public works team delivered 6 billion gallons of clean water to the people of South Bend in the last year. We have partnered with IBM to become the world's first city to move our wastewater management into the digital cloud, a technological development that has attracted attention from as far away as China and Israel, and more importantly, one that has helped us to cut the discharge of sewage overflow into the river by 50% compared to 2011. And we installed a hydroelectric turbine in the river

that will save taxpayers thousands every year by producing clean electricity using the power of our river.

Our fire and police departments quietly save lives every single day—a duty that was especially visible on Sunday, when we witnessed the horrifying sight of an aircraft in the living room of a South Bend home. The destruction was unbelievable, but it could have been far worse—and the professionalism of our Fire Department, working in coordination with our police department, streets and sewers, and countless agencies from neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions—showed that these first responders know how to perform under pressure and in difficult circumstances.

To keep this readiness up, we must always be equipping and preparing our Fire Department for the future. After assessing our current and future training needs and facilities, we have concluded that it is time to establish a modern training facility for our fire fighters. And so this evening I can announce a major investment: the Luther J. Taylor Sr. Fire Safety Training Center.

The facility is named to honor our long-time former South Bend Fire Chief and current board of safety member Luther Taylor Sr., who is here tonight and who did a tremendous amount to ensure the effectiveness of training for firefighters and civilians alike. It will provide firefighter training including certification, special teams operations, live fire exercises, and extrication. But just as importantly, it will provide training and education for the public, with community opportunities such as CPR, civilian fire schools, first aid,

and the kind of fire safety outreach that prevents countless fire fatalities in our city.

When it comes to the basics, nothing is more fundamental than the safety and security of our citizens. Last summer we saw alarming levels of gun violence, too much of which involved young people as victim, perpetrator, or both. They tell us that the statistics on crime here are comparable to other cities of our size and makeup, but that is no comfort to the families of those affected, and we must send a message that one violent crime in our community is one too many. We cannot tolerate another summer like last summer.

So this evening I am announcing the formation of an Anti-Violence Commission to apply proven techniques in violence reduction to our neighborhoods. The Commission will be co-chaired by Chief of Police Ron Teachman and Board of Public Safety Member Rev. Eddie Miller, and will include representatives from local, county, and federal law enforcement, social services, and the faith community. This Commission is not there to write a report. They are there to stop the shooting, and at their first meeting in April I will call on them to apply evidence-based approaches that have worked in other communities.

To support this effort, South Bend will join the National Network for Safe Communities, a nationwide support group to help communities apply proven solutions to serious crime problems. This organization, among other things, has championed the use of a Group Violence Reduction Strategy. As the National Network's strategy statement explains, this strategy "has shown

that violence can be dramatically reduced when community members and law enforcement join together to directly engage with these groups and clearly communicate:

- (1) a credible moral community message against violence;
- (2) a credible law enforcement message about the consequences of further violence; and
- (3) a genuine offer of help for those who want it.”

Achieving this requires a partnership with law enforcement, service providers, faith leaders, neighborhoods, and others, and establishing this partnership will be the first step for our Anti-Violence Commission.

As another response to violence, in January I made the decision to join Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a nationwide coalition of over 900 Democratic, Republican, and Independent mayors who believe that we must have common-sense measures like universal background checks and federal penalties for illegal gun trafficking. This is totally compatible with support for the Second Amendment—in fact, 74% of NRA members agree with us that anyone purchasing a gun should have to pass a criminal background check. While we take the steps I have described here at home, Congress should make it easier for us by applying common sense at the national level.

We must also do more to prevent young people from sliding into the circumstances that lead to delinquency, and in some cases violence, in the first place. We as a community—not just a government but a community—must do more to help young people get through the vulnerable stages of childhood and adolescence to become responsible adults. Next month we

will announce a mentoring initiative with a big but straightforward goal: double the number of mentors in our city in three years.

Toward this end, the City has helped to raise over \$100,000 in foundation support, building on existing strength of mentoring programs in our community. This effort has been built by City and community leaders and Members of the South Bend Common Council, and we look forward to the formal announcement.

Delivering good government

The second priority I spoke of—good government—concerns not just what we do but how we do it. Adapting and reforming City government has been a top priority literally from day one, when we issued the City’s first Ethics Code, and continues every day.

We have enhanced the accessibility of the Mayor’s office through a “Mayor’s Night Out” program. The concept is simple: we regularly go out into the community, set up a card table, and ensure that any citizen who shows up can have my undivided attention to discuss any matter they wish to bring up. To date I have personally met over 340 individuals in every district of our city to discuss issues of concern to them and work together to solve problems. Just as important, department heads are available at these neighborhood events to help provide information and solutions directly, and Council Members often attend. It’s part of the vision of a more accessible government, sending the message that in this organization, every official including the mayor is directly and personally available.

Good government also means good fiscal stewardship. I know that the phrase “municipal finance” does not make most people leap out of their seats. But you need to know about what has been achieved when it comes to the fiscal position of our city. One area where we have made gains is restructuring our bonds to take advantage of low interest rates. Bond refinancing on two major bonds has saved the city \$3.6 million that can be put to other priorities, and two more refinancing efforts are in the works.

And the overall fiscal strength of our City has allowed us to sustain a AA credit rating—the only Hoosier class two city to do so. This means that South Bend is the most creditworthy city of its kind in the whole state of Indiana. At a time when Washington is bogged down in debates over the escalating debt, I want to be sure citizens understand that the fiscal discipline and painful choices we have made have translated into solid financial health even in these lean times.

We are using technology to better serve citizens, setting up an award-winning new website for the City of South Bend, installing a new voice-over-IP telephone system which will save over one million dollars, and using new in-house software to better serve citizens.

And I am particularly gratified to report that we have delivered a 311 call center so that citizens no longer have to guess which phone number to call for a pothole and which for a question on the water bill. By calling 311, they have access to a team of problem-solvers who can get them the information they need. We have already moved the streets department, solid waste, and

waste water onto this system, and envision eventually making 311 the one-stop-shop for all city services. Call center staff, led by Cynthia Simmons, have been taking calls in English and Spanish, resolving countless issues for citizens.

It's not just the tools and technologies that matter—it's the way we do business, the human side. A good government looks at opportunities from every angle, and resists the bureaucratic tendency to regard human beings as numbers on a page. A more people-focused strategy is at the core of our approach, and this has led to changes in the way we handle decisions. For example, in the Department of Community Investment, new thinking led us to re-envision our response to construction affecting Fellows Street, ultimately saving 30 homes and avoiding \$6 million in taxpayer expenditures.

Changing the way we do business also means making sure our city purchasing is more reflective of the diversity of our community. Our Diversity Utilization Board has been working to broaden the capacity of local minority-owned and women-owned businesses and to make city bidding more transparent and easier to navigate. This initiative hosted a successful outreach event in October with over 125 participants, and held a follow-up event just last week, with much more activity planned for the future as we work toward our long-term goal.

In the year to come, the work of enhancing government continues through initiatives like Code for America. South Bend is one of ten municipalities around America that successfully competed for the opportunity to host three

fellows from this program, sometimes called the “peace corps for geeks.” As fellows in the Code for America program, IT and design professionals put lucrative careers on hold to spend one year as part of a team of three, helping to develop apps that will strengthen a city. Our team of first-rate fellows has already developed a local Wiki page and geographic mapping service, and they will be working all year on economic development and neighborhood issues to deliver applications that make us a smarter city and help citizens get more involved, delivering potentially millions of dollars of value at a fraction of the cost.

As we move toward being regarded as a smarter city, our progress is beginning to turn heads around the country. National Public Radio featured South Bend in a story about how to re-tool the American industrial economy for the future. And while South Bend has rightly learned to be suspicious of top ten lists, there is one you should certainly know about. A national publication associated with the Global IT firm Cisco Systems recently published a report on ten “Smart Cities” around the world. The focus was on communities transforming their fate through information technology. The cities mentioned included Boston, San Francisco, Singapore and Stockholm... and South Bend, Indiana. We are transforming our future, and the consequence is that there is a great buzz about South Bend right now.

One last point that must be made about the way we do business. Cities that think only within their boundaries are destined to fail in an interconnected world. We can and must understand that we rise and fall as a region, and our survival depends on strengthening our connections within and beyond our immediate area. People from South Bend work at jobs in Mishawaka and

beyond, and vice versa, and we must have a more integrated approach to economic development or we risk wasting resources by effectively competing against ourselves. This is why we have continued to build a highly positive relationship with the City of Mishawaka and other neighbors, and this is why our job-creating partnership with the Saint Joseph County Chamber of Commerce is so important, and why the broader, regional efforts of the Michiana Partnership will be a vital part of our ability to market ourselves in the future.

South Bend must also keep its place among the community of leading cities in Indiana, ensuring that the shared interests of larger cities are heard at the statehouse. I have accepted the chairmanship of the Indiana Urban Mayors Caucus, an association of cities with populations over 25,000, to speak out on legislative developments that can help or hurt cities like ours on issues ranging from land use to transportation.

To put it simply, connectedness is the currency of success in today's economy. That's why we have been reaching not only beyond city limits and county lines but also party lines. Last year we traded in partisanship for partnership, teaming up with Governor Daniels and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, and within weeks we were celebrating the creation of over 60, good paying, union jobs at a new Hubbell-Raco facility on the Northwest Side, with local and state support. We look forward to sustaining this partnership with the new administration, and I have spoken with Governor Pence about more ways to work together to create jobs in our area. You can care about the values that make you a Democrat, and also care

enough for our economy to know when to reach across the aisle to get something done.

Creating jobs

I have spoken about making the basics easy and about good government, but of the three pillars of administration policy, the one I am asked about most often is job creation. Here, we have much work remaining to be done, but clearly South Bend's economy is continuing to come back. After a frightening period of double-digit local unemployment at the depth of the recession, unemployment for the South Bend-Mishawaka statistical area has fallen from 11.3% in 2010, to 9.9% in 2011, to 8.9% last year. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over the course of 2012, our area created 1,600 jobs, and we have 11,900 more jobs than we did at the low point of the recession in the summer of 2009. We have a long way to go, but the region and the city are heading in the right direction.

Overall, we recorded over \$200 million in private investment last year in the city. This includes \$74.9 million in commercial private investment associated with partnerships in our Department of Community Investment. These projects will be associated with 536 new jobs, enough to reduce the city's unemployment rate by a full percentage point.

Growth and development are occurring across the different corners of our city. The Northeast side area known as the Triangle has 11 homes now under construction, forming a new mixed-income neighborhood with high quality houses from a number of local builders that collectively set the standard for

new construction in South Bend. Meanwhile, 30 new flats in the Eddy Street Commons area are under construction, with another 15 planned. This development is just one of many areas in which the University of Notre Dame has demonstrated its continuing institutional commitment to the economic growth and development of South Bend, and our partnerships with Notre Dame and the other universities and medical institutions that help power to our economy—a growing phenomenon sometimes called “eds and meds”—continue to help us develop for the future.

Meanwhile, on the west side, the former Bendix and Bosch plant, which closed in 2011 and stood empty, has been sold to Curtis Products, a long-standing, local family-owned business, allowing us to retain over 300 employees in an area of town that needs the jobs and investment.

The southwest edge of downtown saw Data Realty opening a 50,000 square foot facility in November representing \$15 million in investment and already the home of over 20 good-paying jobs. They are the first tenant on the Ignition Park site, repopulating long-dormant Studebaker land and creating jobs in industries that didn’t even exist twenty-five years ago. Meanwhile, we have partnered with new-technology company F-cubed to temporarily locate them at the old St Joseph High School site, with a view to locating them in Ignition Park soon.

Just north of Ignition Park, work will soon be underway to restore an 800,000 square foot factory and the area around it, to be called the Renaissance District. Already \$3.7 million in private funds have been invested here, and in a new partnership with the city, the investors are

committed to putting in at least \$17.5 million overall to rehabilitate this industrial space into a mixed-use building of data centers, high tech office space, and other uses.

Downtown has seen a resurgence of interest, with \$3 million private investment in Coveleski stadium, which garnered an award for the best stadium renovation of the year in America and led to over a 50% increase in attendance over the prior year. The State Theater, too long dark, will be hosting its first event under new ownership next week.

We saw the completion and full occupancy of the East Bank townhomes. With St Joe High, downtown has a high school again for the first time since 1968. And the “Riverrace Townhomes” across from the Emporium are drawing more residents to the heart of the city. It can no longer be said of South Bend that we neglect the economic value of our beautiful River.

To continue this momentum, we must keep focus on economic growth and make needed investments for the future.

In the coming year, we will capitalize on the rediscovery of the value of our river, with plans for new river lighting, and more growth to take place from the East Race area to the former Transpo maintenance site.

Meanwhile, we are poised for a potentially game-changing investment in the structure of downtown, by taking some of our one-way streets and converting them into a two-way pattern that is more suited to retail, pedestrian traffic, and other economically desirable activity. The original

concept for the one-way streets was based on traffic engineering, but took no account of the impact on economic development. Being a smarter city means looking at the bigger picture, and we cannot expect people to linger downtown if a four-lane highway shoots people out of the heart of our city as soon as they are in it.

One recent study of five cities to make this change found that all five of them reported significant amounts of redevelopment, increased sales tax revenues, and increased retail occupancy, and four of the five showed increased building of new offices, additional residential units, and increased office occupancy. If we can create jobs and tax base while reinvigorating the urban core of our city, adding a couple minutes to the commute might prove to be worth it. Right now, the administration is undertaking feasibility and design work to create a more economically viable and people-friendly downtown streetscape.

We also have work to do when it comes to investments in our human capital—the software to go along with our economic hardware. One refrain from our Economic Summit was that we must build up the local contingent of skilled workers—or as one CEO put it, “we need more geeks” if our economy is going to succeed. That’s why we are concentrating on ways to replace brain drain with brain gain. An example of this is the enFocus program, which allows seven graduates of Notre Dame’s ESTEEM program to remain in our community, passing up attractive jobs in the private sector to spend a year solving problems and working on issues of civic importance. The inaugural class has already delivered solutions and ideas throughout the community, including a way potentially to save taxpayers hundreds of

thousands of dollars in Fire Department operational costs alone, and I'm proud that our city is a founding co-sponsor of this effort.

Economic development also means investing in quality of life. The truth is that labor is mobile, and skilled employees go where quality of life is high. That's why it matters, not just intrinsically but economically, that the Morris Civic is again in the Top 100 global venues, and that our Parks Department is one of the tiny handful to earn the coveted Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies accreditation. It's why I spent six months practicing for my symphony orchestra debut on the piano—to draw attention to the fact that the arts are not just meaningful in themselves, but also an indispensable pillar of an economically healthy community.

And in order to attract and retain job-creating talent and businesses, we must ensure that our neighborhoods are strong and vibrant. That's why we are actively exploring ambitious new approaches to our corridors, especially the Lincoln Way West corridor that provides the first impression of our city to thousands of people who pass between the airport and our downtown.

And that's also why it's such a priority to address vacant and abandoned homes in our city. Early last year, we convened a group of local government policymakers, neighborhood advocates, and private sector experts to form a Task Force on Vacant and Abandoned Properties. This group conducted extensive analysis, and delivered an extremely informative report and series of recommendations, now available on the city website.

In February, in response to this report, I stood in a once-vacant home rehabilitated by the Near Northwest Neighborhood Association, and announced a bold target for our community: to address 1,000 vacant and abandoned homes in 1,000 days. The simple mathematical truth is that we have too many houses in this city, and many houses are in such disrepair they will have to be demolished. The first 50 are already underway. But this is not only a demolition program, and we should rehabilitate those houses that can be saved even as we tear down the ones we cannot. Our new director of code enforcement, Shubhada Kambli, will bring her extensive education and experience in policy, design, and engineering, to oversee this ambitious program.

There is a risk inherent in setting a target like this. But we need to take more risks around here, and we need to rally together to do something challenging but necessary for the future viability of our neighborhoods. It was Leonard Bernstein who said that “To achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan and not quite enough time.”

To achieve this goal, we must keep it a top priority in the city budget, using both economic development dollars and general fund resources to tackle the problem. The Council passed a budget measure last year to double the funding for addressing these homes, and we will ask for continued support for this priority in the coming budget. At the same time, the truth is that we cannot meet the goal through government alone. That’s why we need every nonprofit, private business, and individual to help. So how many houses, out of that thousand, can I put you down for? Whether it’s a substantial financial gift to rehabilitate a crumbling home, or an individual ready to acquire

vacant land for a side lot, or something as simple as committing to mow the lawn of a vacant house on your block until it is reoccupied, we need everyone to do their part. We are counting on cooperation from citizens, as well as other units of government, to help us meet this goal.

Conclusion: Openness and community

The achievements and plans I have described in these three areas—making sure the basics are easy, furnishing good government, and creating jobs—represent just a fraction of the activity taking place in our city. They all feed a single, overarching vision: that South Bend’s future is as a safe and well-connected city where everyone can thrive. That shared vision is what propelled this administration into office, and it animates everything we do.

But it’s not enough to think about the level of activity or the structure of our efforts in government. To power a historic comeback, we must also consider our community’s character. Our readiness to seize opportunities, and the way we all behave when confronted with challenges... it all stacks up to say something about who we are as a city.

Last year, I spoke of unity, and I want to return for a moment to that theme. There is never total unity of opinions even between two people, let alone a hundred thousand, but we can and must have unity of purpose, to continue to grow and move forward. We must continue to be bigger—bigger-hearted, and bigger-minded—to realize the potential of our great city and move without fear toward our shared future.

Just two years from now, we mark the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of our City in 1865. And at 150 years old, we will be called to think about what kind of city we are. Not the size of our population, the extent of our boundaries, the measure of our wealth—but what *kind* of city are we. Cities, like people, have personalities. Cities, like people, succeed when they are forward-looking, big-hearted and open. Above all, open. So how open is our city right now?

Are we open for business?

Are we open to newcomers, to visitors, to immigrants?

Are we open to the impact of technology in an open-source, open-data, open-fiber world?

Are we open to change?

Most importantly, are we open to each other?

If we are going to succeed in meeting our challenges, if we are going to open a new era in the life of our city, then we must *be* open.

Our future has no place for small-ball politics, for pettiness, for any of us to be quick to take offense and slow to release a grudge. To be that way is to close oneself—and a city, like a person, becomes smaller when closed off. If we close our minds to new ideas, close our doors to new people, close our

thoughts to the reality of change, then we close off possibilities and paths that lead to a better future.

It is easy—far too easy in fact—to get attention by being the first to point out what is missing, what is lost, what is incomplete. Far too easy to attack the good for not being perfect.

Yes, we live a real and imperfect world, where there are steps backward and some dreams don't come true and not everything comes as fast or as easy as we would like. Business is expanding, not exploding; crime is down but it is not gone; employment is up but it is not full. Our work is very much cut out for us.

But if we open up—open new connections and new paths, continue to reopen old places with new futures, then we open opportunities for this community that can propel us not just beyond where we are now but far beyond even the best moments in our storied past.

Our city was created as a byproduct of the opening of the West. Once upon a time, this *was* the West. And as the West opened and unfolded, this city opened shops and hotels, opened roads and railways, and opened great factories that built the vehicles destined for the open road, inventions that themselves helped open America for millions. And by being open to immigration, innovation, and imagination, we opened doors to new futures for the people who lived here.

The legacy of one closure—one that happened fifty years ago this October—will not define us, other than to remind us why we must be ever more open to the possibilities from which we will fashion our better future.

We have given ourselves permission to believe in our city again. No city made up of the kind of people we are, that's been through what we've been through and built what we've built and lost what we've lost and seen what we've seen and made what we've made and recovered from what we've recovered from... no such city can fail unless we let it. The state of our city rests on old strength and new hope, and we have everything it takes to open the next chapter in South Bend's story.