

## 2011 State of the City Address

I want to welcome everyone to the 2011 State of the City Address. I'd like to thank Rob Shilts and his amazing crew for making sure everything was ready for this evening. Rob, you do a great job, thank you.

I would like to also thank members of our city council who are in attendance tonight. Please stand as I call your name:

Council President William T. Murphy

Councilman Joe Abban

Councilman Joe Ault

Councilman Ken Austin

Councilman Steve Barnett

Councilwoman Ann Gordon

Councilman Steve Houglund

Thanks to each of our council members for the work they do for the citizens of Franklin.

I would also like to recognize members of our Board of works:

Joe Ault and Dan Murray, if you could please stand.

I would also like to recognize two officials here tonight that I have gotten to know over the last few years:

Clerk-Treasurer Janet Alexander and City Court Judge Robert D. Schafstall, thank you for serving the citizens of Franklin. It is a pleasure serving the citizens of Franklin with you (applaud).

It has been my honor to serve as Mayor of my hometown for 3 years now and I must admit that each year has been filled with many challenges, but also many opportunities. Within the last year or so, we have spent the majority of our time on rebuilding from the flood of 2008 and how we organize as a government.

We started last year by getting acquainted with our new city hall at 70 E Monroe Street. After the 2008 flood, the council and I worked together to consolidate several of our services into one building. I believe this has made government more efficient in Franklin: You can now visit the clerk, mayor, planning, engineering, and code enforcement all in one convenient location. Also, the new council chamber is state of the art, and serves as a great place for community meetings.

Speaking about buildings, last year we dedicated the new north side fire station. Our business partners at NSK donated the land for that station. Because of the generosity of NSK, our taxpayers can have a state-of-the art fire station on the city's northside with minimal cost incurred. I would like to thank our partners at NSK.

Just today we dedicated the new east side fire station. It was a wonderful event. I wish to thank our business partners from Best Buy and the members from the Redevelopment Commission for releasing funds from the special tif district to build it. Would members of the city's RDC and members of Best Buy's leadership please rise so you can be acknowledged for your contribution to Franklin's public safety (applaud).

I want to also note that these stations were basically the result of planning by committees comprised of citizen volunteers and fire department employees. I want to thank the public committees and the Franklin Fire Department that did a complete review of our fire service to help us arrive at where we are today.

There are still items being discussed regarding fire service.

One item still being worked on is the desire to be fairly paid for delivering fire service to Franklin Township. The City of Franklin is reviewing several options on how to accomplish this, and will continue to work with the Township Trustee on identifying an agreeable resolution.

2010 did see the City and County come together to save the taxpayers money and make good use of assets. The city accepted ownership of some county assets that we believe make the downtown core stronger and the county was able to put the old police building to use for the prosecutor's office.

This saved taxpayers the cost of new buildings and kept those workers in the downtown business district.

As Mayor I am hopeful that we will build on this success in 2011 by fully integrating our 911 dispatch, putting the finishing touches on an agreement to share a fueling system and other cost saving measures.

After the flood of 2008 it took us almost two years to make a final decision not to return to the old police building on Caisson Drive. 2010 saw us consolidate the City Police Department and Street Department into a new state of the art facility on US31.

Our street department has been working hard lately to ensure that our streets are passable and in good condition despite adverse weather from the winter storms. I believe they have done a tremendous job and would like to thank them at this time.

The police department has also had many challenges to deal with over the last year. Chief O'Sullivan and Deputy Chief Tennell, as well as members of the entire department, are working hard every day

to provide the citizens of this community with the best service they can. The department is strong and has an excellent staff and I assure you we believe in lessons learned and progress made. I would like to thank the police department at this time for their leadership and service to Franklin.

Just within the past few weeks we accepted offers on the old city hall and the old planning building. I am excited and hopeful that the council will accept both offers adding to the tax rolls and bring new jobs to the downtown.

As many of you know, the old planning department at 44 N Jackson will be home to Korn Country Radio 100.3 I am excited about this development and I want to recognize a very important member of our community, resident of Franklin and host of Korn's 'Talk of the Town,' Mr. Dave Wilson. Dave, thank you for being a valuable part of our community and for the great entertainment you provide listeners throughout central Indiana.

Another way Franklin has been re-shaping itself over the past year has been the ongoing Project Green. As you know, Project Green was developed in response to the flood of 2008 as a way to responsibly remove the destroyed homes, and to help our nonprofits. As of last week, we have 45 homes completely removed, and the nonprofits have been able to accumulate materials and funding through auctions. While I could spend an hour on this project alone it is best to just state that as Mayor I am very proud of the entire team.

In 2011 we will ask a group of citizens to come together with the park department to study and plan the reuse of this area. We will set aside \$350,000 from flood recovery funds to build out that plan. At this time I would like to recognize members of our Project Green team, and would like to thank Discover Downtown, Franklin Heritage, Habitat for Humanity and Interchurch Food Pantry for their involvement in the Project Green.

Let's talk about downtown for a few minutes. As you may remember the RDC approved the creation and funding of the Franklin Development Corporation in the fall of 2008. As Mayor I know this has been a controversial program with some citizens.

I want to say, for the record, that as mayor I fully support having the tools in place to strengthen the value and vitality of the downtown core. All studies agree that with Franklin as a county seat and it's proximity to Indianapolis, Franklin can and must maintain a strong business center to attract citizens and investors to choose Franklin. We must position ourselves for economic development. The strength and success being enjoyed by the Artcraft, Wadsworth Chocolate, Indigo Duck, the restoration of the Henderson Drug Store block and the soon to begin rehab of the Hazelett building by the Bemis Group are but a few strong examples of the early success of downtown development with several being assisted by the FDC. I want to congratulate Craig Wells and all members of the FDC board for working hard on making Franklin a competitive place to attract business and investment.

The RDC commitment to the Gateway project is moving it along. We anticipate funding for the first leg

to allow construction in the next two years. Again, this project will attract business and investment into the community while adding miles of trails and renewed sidewalks to the community. One only need remember the old fences, weeds and mulberry trees on 44 to understand how improving the entryways can change a community.

The RDC success is not only in the success of gateways and downtown new business it also had success in the industrial areas.

While we did have an unfortunate experience with the California brewery that did not work out, much was learned by that process, such as ways to get necessary information sooner.

We have seen several business expansions in Franklin during this time of overall business downturn. Some examples are the new PCTNA facility, additional space and jobs at REXAM, additions at Interstate Warehousing, the new National Guard armory and many more.

Specifically, Premium Composite Technology has invested \$14.2 million in Franklin, while the new National Guard armory will be investing \$35 million. These companies also will offer sustainable, quality jobs in our community.

In fact since 2008 the city has added over 1,600,000 Sq Ft of commercial space with construction value of over 80 million dollars. The assessed value of these projects should be 35 to 40 million dollars.

Our retail area has also remained strong with several new and remodeled businesses on US 31 and along Jefferson street, including, Enzo Pizza, M&I Bank, Crane Credit Union, Kroger, Dr. Daniel Martin's beautiful new orthodontist's office, and many others.

These business successes add property value, tax dollars and jobs to the community during a critical time to keep our local economy moving forward. I am happy to say that many of these companies had the opportunity to tell me how much they enjoy being part of Franklin and how our planning department helped them get through the permit process.

There are other departments that have made some great strides this past year.

The Cemetery made great progress with new software to map all graves.

The Sewer department has just finished a major project relining several thousand feet of old sewer line in the old part of the city.

The city has made a commitment to reline all old clay tile over a several year project.

Just a few weeks ago the Sewer Department entered a 2 plus million dollar project to make major improvements to the physical plant. The Storm Water Utility has made several drainage improvements including a major project in Knowlwood, and has several on the schedule for 2011 including cleaning of Roaring Run.

An engineering study of a major drainage improvement project east of the railroad and along Yandees

and Hurricane Street.

The Parks Department in 2010 received the 'Playful City' designation, which is a great award for a city our size. I would like to thank the parks department for making Franklin a beautiful and fun place, as well as all the other departments who work hard for the citizens of Franklin (applaud).

With a lot of hard work the new city Tree Board was able to reestablish Franklin as a Tree City in 2010 and get a grant to begin an update to the tree inventory which will guide tree maintenance and planting in the coming years.

At the end of 2010 the city saw several long delayed projects get some traction.

An engineering firm was hired to review the plan for the Canary Creek retention facility with the hope of getting new IDEM and DNR approval to move forward with construction. This facility is needed.

The North Main Transformation Enhancement project originally started during Mayor Norm Blankenship's first term is making progress and should begin in 2011. When finished, it will improve drainage, landscaping, lighting and pavement from Jefferson to US 31 with the first section being from Jefferson to Graham.

After three years of failed attempts we should see the construction of a walk bridge over Canary Creek on Westview Drive to make this a safe pedestrian passage.

As we all now, the economy is still going to be a concern in the coming years. As mayor, I will do everything I can to responsibly grow Franklin.

Let's close out the evening with a review of our financial success. As noted:

The city paid cash for the new north fire station,

The city was able to use Best Buy TIF funds to pay for the new east side fire station,

The city will use funds already on-hand for the following projects,

\$685,000 in Cumulative Capital Development cash will pay for City Hall. This is a class A building at \$70 per foot.

We will use cash from the CCD fund for Westview Drive Bridge

While I am still waiting for a final audited number from the Clerk's office I have suggested using any available remaining funds for community improvement projects most being drainage related. These funds are available because as a City we did a great job of self-help recovering from the flood, and now as Mayor I am proud to see good projects accomplished with any remaining funds.

While it is true that the City has spent some of the cash reserves in the TIF funds it is important to note

that these funds are being used as investment to attract jobs and fund long term projects that will attract more investment and jobs to the community. With current commitments TIF accounts should end the year with a balance around \$5,000,000 and as previous tax abated projects run the course and new buildings as noted above are added in the tif district the cash available will remain strong and grow.

Our sewer utility fund has funded two major projects of over \$3,000,000 and still has over \$3 million in reserves for future projects and our citizens should not see any increases in rates for years to come.

Last but most important for the tax paying citizens is the general fund.

This is where the property tax dollars and income tax dollar funds are used to implement the basic operations of the city government.

We all have heard about cities being broke, cutting back services and laying off people. This past spring the DLGF notified us that because of the impact of the property tax caps and lower income tax collection in 2009 our expected income from those two taxes would result in a loss of \$1.3 million in income to the general fund in 2011.

In the summer of 2010 our city council worked together with department heads to cut over \$1,300,000 out of the 2011 budget. By being careful again with spending we should be able to live within this reduced budget and still deliver the necessary services to the community.

As Mayor I work hard with all departments to not waste funds.

Every department met or exceeded my cut back request in 2010 by returning over \$2,400,000 to the general fund unspent.

These unspent funds along with the fact that in in 2008 and 2009 we moved over \$3 million into the rainy day fund from unspent funds will assure the citizens and workers of Franklin that services will remain strong with no loss of staff in 2011

I want to thank all city employees and council for assisting me in meeting this incredible goal.

We hope that with the increased tax base we talked about earlier, and with more people finding work, our income tax collection and property tax collection will increase in 2012 and allow the city to consider some cost of living increases and give us more funds for street and sidewalk repairs.

As mayor, my goal is to continue to keep a tight general fund budget and live within our means, while at the same time working with the Council, RDC, FDC, and other agencies and the citizens to be sure we keep investing into the critical areas of downtown development, industrial and retail development, sidewalks, drainage and parks.

But city government cannot keep a community strong alone. We must remember to assist when possible our community partners. Over the past few years I have had the privilege to work with many community leaders.

One community initiative I am proud of is that in 2010, Franklin College, the City of Franklin, Johnson Memorial Hospital and the Franklin School Corporation all joined together with Partnership for a Healthier Johnson County to launch the 'Get Healthy Franklin' project. This initiative promotes healthy living in our community, and has seen a pretty big growth in membership since it first started. I would like to thank Jane Blessing and her team from Partnership for all the great work they do to make Franklin a healthy community.

Jane is actually here tonight in the lobby, so please stop by and sign up for the initiative if you haven't already.

There are many other members in our community who have made great strides over the last year to make Franklin a great community. We have actually started working on a promotional video in the city to spotlight some of the tremendous talent here, both in and out of the government. So rather than tell you all about the great work these groups are doing, I'll just let them speak for themselves by giving you a preview of the larger video.

[VIDEO]

I'd like to note that that video was put together by a Franklin resident. Most of you know him from the B-Movie Festival, or maybe just from talking with him at Benjamin's. I'd like to thank Bill Dever for putting this together (applaud).

As we close out the evening, I'd just like to say that it is an honor to serve as mayor of my hometown. I am proud of all the work we accomplished together in 2010, and I am always amazed by the talent and entrepreneurial spirit found here in Franklin.

Our department heads came up with the motto 'city of choice' to describe how they felt about Franklin way back in 2009. What they meant by that is that Franklin is a place where people choose to live and work because of the wonderful quality of life found here.

As we move forward through 2011, we will have many choices to make, regarding investment opportunities, real estate opportunities, and cultural opportunities. Whatever choices we make, must be made with the best interest of the citizens at heart. I as mayor, along with other elected officials, appointed officials and community partners, must continue to promote the advancement and betterment of Franklin as a great place to live, work and play for a lifetime for all of Franklin's citizens.

Thank you for being here tonight.