

Presented by Mayor Ruben Pineda
Monday, April 16, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.
City Hall

Thank you David, and thanks to the Western DuPage Chamber for its longstanding tradition of sponsoring the State of the City Address and providing the refreshments and opportunity for networking this evening.

I'd like to start by recognizing the men and women of the West Chicago City Council seated before me: Aldermen Lori Chassee, Jayme Sheahan, Al Hallett, Melissa Ferguson, Sandy Dimas, Kurt Meissner, Heather Brown, George Garcia, Becky Stout, Noreen Ligino-Kubinski, Jim Beifuss, Bonnie Gagliardi, Michael Ferguson, our newest Alderman Matt Garling, and City Clerk Nancy Smith. I have to say, doing this for the past 20 years or so, this is one of the best Councils I've had the honor to serve with. Your willingness to get involved and give back through your time and many talents demonstrates your love for the community and desire to serve others.

The exciting accomplishments that I will address tonight have been made possible through your service. I would also like to thank our many wonderful & hard working employees who keep the City running as smoothly as possible.

Also here tonight, we are honored to have other local officials. Their presence reflects the level of interest and support they have shown our community. The City is grateful, and I wish to acknowledge them.

I've been honored to be your Mayor for the past six years and would be remiss for not mentioning the person in this room who has stood by my side from the beginning, and who continues to support my hopes and dreams for this community, along with the crazy hours and missed dinners that they require; my wife – my life – Julie Pineda. Thank you for your loving support.

Now down to business. A little more than a year ago, in the fall of 2016, the City embarked on a campaign to solicit feedback from a wide cross-section of the community: intergovernmental partners, business leaders, faith-based community members, and residents, about the future of West Chicago. We conducted focus groups, surveys and one-on-one conversations, in order to gain a collective vision for the future. What resulted was a formal document, the West Chicago Strategic Plan, which will serve as our roadmap for the next ten years. Four specific areas were identified as priorities, requiring strategic action: Economic Development; Community Image; Intergovernmental Partnerships; and a Celebration of West Chicago's Diversity.

Staff and your elected leaders prioritized the list of innovative action steps into first-year, mid-term and long-range goals, and implementation for year one was set in motion.

What has taken place since then has been amazing. It's been a year of accomplishments, and I'm excited to share some of the highlights tonight.

Let's start with economic development. We have a new Community Development Director, Tom Dabareiner who comes to us from Bloomington and who will lead, among other duties of the Department, our Economic Development efforts. Brand new to his team is Peter Kelly, our new Business Development Coordinator. Welcome to the City, Tom & Pete.

Economic development was an area of great importance to the community, and rightly so. Our outlined strategy is steeped in a data-to-action approach and is boldly proactive. With 86% of new jobs and capital investment generated from existing employers, and likewise in many cases, new retail and restaurant activity directly coming from local business expansion, a business retention and expansion program is as important as business recruitment.

For this reason, staff has conducted a rapid-succession series of business retention meetings in the North Avenue business district, involving shopping center managers and property owners, to determine the stability of the business district over the next two years and to address its needs.

As part of the Route 59-North Avenue Market Study, our consultant met with nearly all of the property owners and many of the tenants. In the future, staff will establish a regular series of business retention meetings as the basis of a development strategy.

We continue to work with the Library District to co-organize a Small Business Workshop Series in the 2018 calendar year. Regional speakers will be invited to present programs on various topics to help support the efforts of our small businesses.

Active listening on business retention visits has rewarded staff with valuable insights that will help us provide better service, greater exposure and increased satisfaction levels to our business partners. Last December, we visited four award-winning businesses – American Standard Circuits, Chris Mechanical, Buck Services and Timberlake Apartments.

The visits connected us to the people who power up these business engines every day and provide the community and beyond with the goods and services that shape our world.

We're not the only ones recognizing the innovators in West Chicago. Last year, Crain's featured Masonite's Innovation Center on Powis Road for the work that occurs in its 140,000 square foot facility; and last month, Governor Bruce Rauner visited American Standard Circuits, for a tour of the global manufacturing giant.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of our businesses, large and small, for choosing to bring their talent, backbone and work ethic to West Chicago.

On the recruitment side, a major directive of our Strategic Plan called for enhanced, distinctively-branded economic development recruitment tools – specifically a dedicated business-forward graphic logo, tagline and development website. As there has never been a better time to join the ranks of successful businesses which call West Chicago home, we wanted to create a brand that reflected

immediacy, forward movement, and strength; one to help equip decision-makers with the information they need to make the right location choice for their business in our welcoming City.

We wanted this brand to combine traditional and trending elements in our effort to convey the solid foundation of a proud and successful past with the City's progressive advantages and which underscores Business Works Here. I'm pleased to announce the recent launch of westchicagonow.org.

The micro-site was developed by staff and our web partner Technivista to showcase our key industries, business districts and featured, high profile available properties. Breaking new ground, a next generation mapping function created in house, allows prospective investors to search available properties in five key categories; the Central Manufacturing District, Downtown Main Street, the Neltnor Blvd District, the Roosevelt Road District and the North Avenue District, through either a pin number or address. This useful tool is a value added for the developer or location scout wanting zoning, land use and TIF District information, as well as providing a visual of the parcel under consideration.

We also added a section labeled Entrepreneurs Welcome that aims to inspire those with a dream, to invest it in West Chicago. We want others to know that the entrepreneurial spirit is nurtured here in West Chicago.

- We continue to partner with existing property and shopping center owners, as well as interested developers, to promote the community through the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) to recruit new retail and restaurant users to the community.
- Staff continues to market available properties via our economic alliance partner, Choose DuPage's Broker Savant, an online database to list available properties. Further, City staff will promote available properties at ICSC's annual Chicago Deal Making events and respond quickly to all prospects looking to locate in West Chicago.
- Progress is being made on the development of a long-range master plan to reposition the former General Mills site to proactively attract new investors and employers to the community, with the possibility of segmenting the site into smaller developable "pads" that would be marketed to smaller users.
- We have partnered with the DuPage Airport Authority and Choose DuPage to emphasize the asset of the DuPage Business Center and develop incentive plans for new development.

These efforts have led to several exciting prospects already bubbling to the surface, and while it's too soon to reveal the details, I can share some hints of what's to come:

- Currently, plans are being reviewed for nearly 800,000 square feet of warehouse/distribution space at the DuPage Business Center
- We are expecting to receive plans in the upcoming 12 months for another 750,000 square feet of manufacturing/distribution
- And, we are expecting discussions to start in the upcoming 12 months on another 1,100,000 square feet of manufacturing/distribution.

For the 1st time in over 10 years, I have been informed that we might be running out of available property in the DuPage Business Center. That my friends, is a GREAT problem to have!

Add to this the already 50 businesses, including Kindred Coffee Roasters, which have joined the community since we last met for the State of the City. Clearly, *Business Works Here*.

Moving to the next area of concentration cited by community members as a priority, Community Image, we engaged a Marketing Consultant, Mungo Creative Group, to assist staff in creating a formal Strategic Marketing Plan in March 2017. What was confirmed in the outreach component of the process was that West Chicagoans are proud of their community identity and don't wish it compared, or worse, changed to replicate another city's identity. The feedback was clear and resounding, "we love our City and we want others to know why". In short, this translated into getting more consistent, positive messaging to a wider audience.

- So, we got more social with Facebook and Instagram. We now have the ability to engage worldwide followers. You can't get a much wider audience than that. If you don't already, please follow us @CityofWestChicago. And for those who have an Instagram account, let's start a campaign to share our best photos of the community by adding #cityofwestchicagoil when you post them.

In the second half of last year to today, we've had a fair share of good news being published. Some examples:

- The partnership our Police Department has built with our faith-based communities to reduce crime and tackle social issues that diminish the quality of life for their members.
- Our Police Department achieving Tier II Accreditation through the Illinois Law Enforcement Accreditation Program which requires 180 standards be met in the areas of Administration, Operations, Personnel and Training, compared to the 67 standards of Tier I Accreditation. Congratulations to Chief Uplegger and his dedicated team for this impressive achievement.
- The dedication of a Monarch Way Station and the first ever Pumpkin Composting event through the hard work of our Environmental Commission and the Green Disciples of the First United Methodist Church
- The hire of our new Special Events Coordinator, Bethany Bayci, who continues to lead committees for all our beloved community events, and who is working on adding a new Food Fest to the roster slated for October 13th. Nothing says West Chicago like our special events. Take a look at a new video produced to market each festival and our wonderful community.

We will continue to tell the unique and heartwarming stories of residents who step up and do so much for our community:

- Judi and Michael Horsley for their work with the Environmental Commission, Blooming Fest, and more
- Melissa Barbier who spearheaded the Little Free Library neighborhood book exchange at our Police Station

- Business leaders such as Martha Ocampo and Gloria Perez, honored by the Aurora Regional Hispanic Chamber as outstanding female business leaders, and all the Brilliance in Business winners
- Community champions like Trini Cantu, Don Smith, Fredericka Howard and Wayne Lofton who were featured in a cover story of the first quarter Window to West Chicago newsletter about their individual contributions; and our esteemed veterans past and present.

There is no shortage of stories about the spirit and character of the people of West Chicago.

We continue to align our community identity with the creative arts as well as community health and sustainability. I'm happy to say, Healthy West Chicago has found its new quarterback in Carly Smitherman and we will be hearing much more from the organization in the near future.

We have received national exposure for this initiative in a piece titled *Five steps to create a healthier community*, created by the City's marketing consultant. The article was picked up in three print publications so far, one in Florida, one in California and one in Arizona. It also achieved 730 digital placements for a total online audience of over than 112M.

This well-deserved exposure for Healthy West Chicago and the City as a successful model for community health and sustainability is a credit to the coalition of partners that have worked so hard since the initiative's inception.

Through the work of the Cultural Arts Commission and collaborations with People Made Visible and Arts DuPage we are engaging artists from many disciplines and destinations near and far, with our community.

Bodo Gsedl, an artist from our Sister City in Taufkirchen vils Germany judged the submissions of the 2018 Community Banner Art Exhibit, and last year at this time, international percussionist Juan Pastor and his band Chinchano performed with Commission member Lew Achenbach in a Jazz Occurrence. Take a look at the energy they brought to Gallery 200 and Arteculture.

Moving to the third directive in the Strategic Plan, Intergovernmental Partnerships were a priority. In this area, we have also accomplished quite a bit this past year:

- We continue to engage other taxing jurisdictions and public agencies to share costs and coordinate capital projects as much as reasonable and beneficial. Staff provided representatives of each of the local taxing bodies with a list of possible capital projects that the City undertakes annually, and encouraged them to jointly bid any work they have which may be similar (e.g. sidewalk replacement and repair, tree trimming and removal, etc.). A schedule of bidding times was provided as well.
- Our continued and new collaborations were leveraged through various projects like the launch of The Shell, with promotion of the new venue as a family destination through media coverage and a permanent presence on the City's website; DuPage Airport Authority's Back to

School event segment on WGN TV's morning show and traffic chopper segments, and featured in the Daily Herald.

- The collaboration between the Gallery Theater Company and People Made Visible, which resulted in saving the talented boutique theater company from relocating to another community and instead finding a permanent home at 129 Main Street in West Chicago.
- Currently, an agreement is in the works with the West Chicago Library District to provide the West Chicago Cultural Art Commission a highly visible location for a piece of public art by renowned Chicago artist, Matthew Hoffman, on its front lawn.
- And most recently, the City and the Park District have put together a committee that includes the Forest Preserve District of DuPage, People Made Visible, The GardenWorks Project, Healthy West Chicago, the Conservation Foundation, WeGrow Dreams Garden Center, Ball Horticultural, First United Methodist Church, the West Chicago Garden Club and others for the purpose of working together to have West Chicago recognized nationally as an official America in Bloom City.

The very core of the America in Bloom program is community-building and working together for community beautification. When we got all these groups together in one room to talk about the work they are doing for our community, it became apparent that this distinction would be one well-deserved. Now, the work of preparing for the two America in Bloom judges scheduled to arrive on July 26th begins. Our service clubs, Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis, are organizing a downtown planting day, Saturday, May 12th from 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon and with the help of Giving Dupage through its DoGood DuPage Program, they are looking for volunteers to plant the flowers the City will supply. Please take one of the America in Bloom postcards being distributed tonight for details on how to get involved. Together we can do this!

The fourth and final area of priority outlined in the West Chicago Strategic Plan, a celebration of our diversity through a program we branded One West Chicago, has been moving forward successfully this past year.

- “One West Chicago” is a call to action to broaden participation in community leadership, invest in long-term relationships and form partnerships with all members of the West Chicago community to reinforce that there is “One West Chicago”, made stronger by its diversity. The recommendation to establish a Spanish-speaking staff position to act as a community-wide resource became a first step, and Adrian Marquez was hired as the City's first Community Outreach Specialist.
- As communication plays a vital role in forming partnerships and fostering civic engagement with community members, Adrian has already made improvements in person and online to those speaking Spanish only. Earlier this year, the City launched Tu Ciudad, a dedicated section of its website for Spanish speakers, social media accounts specific to Spanish-speakers and several translated publications to assist in understanding City services and compliance issues.

- Two areas under development include working with the Small Business Administration to assist Latina women interested in opening their own business through classes in training and funding opportunities, and a Local Government Academy for Latino youth to instill a sense of civic pride and responsibility in the next generation.

This is an exciting time for our City, a time of great promise, but also challenge. Over the last five years, local municipalities like ours have been significantly shortchanged by the State of Illinois for revenue that we depend on to pay for essential operations that impact the daily lives of our residents and business customers – services including police, development, and code enforcement – in an effort to cover its own budget deficits. The latest repercussion of the State’s mismanagement occurred in 2017 when another \$350,000 in income and personal property replacement taxes were siphoned, causing a very large budget gap for West Chicago and communities throughout the State.

As we strive to honor the goals of the Strategic Plan and the intentions of all who participated in the process, to meet our growing obligations associated with funding police pensions, and to continue providing the highest level of service our customers have grown to expect, we have needed to make some tough decisions to offset the State’s unilateral decision to take possession of monies meant for local governments.

I would like to reassure all of the people of West Chicago that I keep in constant contact with our DuPage & Kane Co. Mayors & Presidents, so we can continue to let our State and Federal legislators know, if they can’t support our City & Village residents, we WON’T support them.

That said, there are many significant developments on the horizon, thanks to the hard work of the City Council, staff, and all who participated in the strategic planning process. We are committed to our pledge to our residents and businesses to provide exceptional service and transparent government, while focusing on doing what we can do to relieve the financial burden on our customers.

On that note, I’d like to conclude by thanking you all again for your time and interest in the State of our City. We are on track with our collective vision for the future because of all of you.

Let’s keep moving ahead – together.

May God bless you, the wonderful City of West Chicago and these United States of America.