

Bloomington Common Council-State of the City Minutes
John Waldron Arts Center, 122 S. Walnut Street, Bloomington, Indiana
Thursday, April 03, 2025, 6:00pm

- 1. WELCOME [6:00pm]**

- 2. PRESENTATION OF COLORS [6:02pm]**

- 3. NATIONAL ANTHEM [6:08pm]**

- 4. CALL TO ORDER [6:10pm]**

Council President Stosberg called the meeting to order.

5. ROLL CALL (* indicates participation via Zoom) [6:11pm]

Members:	At-Large
Isak Nti Asare	District 5, Council Parliamentarian
Courtney Daily	At-Large
Matt Flaherty (absent)	District 1, Council Vice President
Isabel Piedmont-Smith	District 4
Dave Rollo	District 2
Kate Rosenbarger (absent)	At-Large
Andy Ruff	District 3, Council President
Hopi Stosberg	District 6
Sydney Zulich	
 City staff, officials, and guests present:	
Susan Stoll	Deputy Clerk
Shatoyia Moss	Community & Family Resources, Director
Michael Diekhoff	Police Department, Chief
Roger Kerr	Fire Department, Chief
Andrea de la Rosa	Small Business Development, Assistant Director
Kerry Thomson	Mayor
Dr. Sharr Pechac	Human Resources, Director
Jane Kupersmith	Economic & Sustainable Development, Director

Stosberg read a land and labor acknowledgment and introduced Mayor Thomson.

6. STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS [6:13pm]

Mayor Kerry Thomson presented the State of the City Remarks (text provided by the Office of the Mayor), attached hereto.

Meeting Date: April 03, 2025

7. ADJOURNMENT [7:24pm]


Stosberg adjourned the meeting.

APPROVED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this
16 day of April, 2025.

APPROVE:


Hopi Stosberg, COUNCIL PRESIDENT

ATTEST:


City Clerk Nicole Bolden

Clerk’s Note: The above minutes summarize the motions passed and issues discussed rather than providing a verbatim account of every word spoken.

- Bloomington City Council meetings can be watched on the following websites:
- Community Action Television Services (CATS) – <https://catvstv.net>
 - YouTube – <https://youtube.com/@citybloomington>

Background materials and packets are available at <https://bloomington.in.gov/council>

Mayor Kerry Thomson:

Good evening, Bloomington! I'm Mayor Kerry Thomson and I'm grateful to see so many of you here tonight.

Your presence shows you care about where we're headed—together—we have the power to guide the future we want to see.

I want to begin by saying how grateful I am that our community made it through last night's storm safely.

As we learned this past winter with our historical snow event, Mother Nature doesn't ask permission—and when the weather shows up, we rely on each other.

To our emergency responders and city crews who were out in the weather protecting lives and clearing the way, thank you.

Even as the storm passed, we woke up to another kind of damage.

Two buildings in our Trades District—the Kiln, and the Forge—were vandalized last night.

This was senseless destruction of places built by and for our community.

Let me be clear: destruction has no place in Bloomington.

In Bloomington, we protect the spaces where inclusion, innovation, and opportunity take root.

Every dollar our businesses have to spend repairing unnecessary and reckless destruction is a dollar they can't put toward helping our community thrive.

We are investigating, we are responding, and we are moving forward.

Let's commit to using our powers for good—our creativity for the benefit of the whole, and our energy to build up, not break down.

About this time last year, I stood here on my 100th day in office. I knew a lot more about where we started and where we planned to go, but I had no idea how quickly progress would be made.

I knew I had only one top priority on my first day in office—to build the cabinet and the team to meet this moment of opportunity for the city of Bloomington.

I've done that, and I found myself writing this year's remarks, trying to whittle them down to a list that is achievable in an hour, even in just a highlight reel.

That is really something.

If you are part of our city of Bloomington staff, would you please stand. Let's give these folks a hand.

They say government moves slow—but clearly, they haven't met this team.

We've done so much, we ran out of time to fit it all in. Let's hear it for the team making things happen.

I also want to recognize our elected officials and county partners in attendance tonight. Thank you for the courage to run for office, and the work you do in partnership to make our community better

Before we dive in, here's a quick roadmap. Tonight, we'll walk through three chapters of our shared journey—all within just the first 15 months of this administration:

Where we started—what we stepped into, including the complex systems, processes, and the state of our city that we encountered on day one.

Where we are—what we've been doing following that essential period of discovery and alignment.

And where we're going—the strategic steps that will carry us forward.

We live in a city full of life, energy, and possibility—a community where neighbors and newcomers come together to create a place of connection—where every street, park, and gathering spot is an opportunity to grow and belong together.

Bloomington deserves a government that embodies our values: inclusivity, honesty, compassion, and transparency.

At City Hall, everything we do is grounded in a clear set of values—values that keep us focused, accountable, and true to the people we serve.

We host a lot of Girl Scout troops at city hall who are learning about government—few months ago, one of the scouts asked me, "What do you do most?"

That's an easy one: *"I do a lot of listening."*

Leadership in Bloomington starts with listening—to residents, staff, experts, and *especially* to those whose voices haven't always been heard.

When our administration took office, we inherited things that needed to be acknowledged and addressed.

I started by listening.

Across departments, staff shared stories of burnout, outdated systems, unclear expectations, and wondering if their expertise and input truly mattered.

We found an organization with many dedicated public servants—and also many unanswered questions.

That needed to change.

So we began with what matters most: our people—building a culture that values our community, the service we provide, and the people who do the work.

Last summer, my Cabinet came together to define the values that would guide us forward—not just as a government but as a team with purpose, vision, and integrity.

These values now ground every decision we make. They reflect who we are, what we stand for, and how we will continue to lead Bloomington into the future.

Let me share how they've shaped the year behind us—and the direction we're heading next.

We are Co-Creators with Our Community.

We know the best ideas come from partnerships.

That was clear during our Downtown Community Cleanup Day, when over 90 neighbors and business owners showed up to reclaim pride in our shared spaces.

We are Accountable Servant Leaders.

We take our responsibility seriously—especially when stewarding your taxpayer dollars.

After a June 25 storm knocked out power for over 60,000 residents, we responded quickly—clearing trees from right-of-ways and then helping you, our residents, by initiating a pick-up service to dispose of the limbs you had cleared.

Then, we launched a full after-action review to learn and improve.

That's what accountability looks like: showing up, owning the outcome, and getting better every time.

We are Demystifying Government.

A transparent government is a trustworthy government.

We want you to know what we're doing, how we're doing it, and why we're doing it.

We're focused on cutting through the red tape, making it easier for you to get involved, and ensuring that government is a resource, *not a barrier*.

That's why I've made it a priority to meet people where they are. Each month, I'm out doorknocking in neighborhoods across the city—to hear directly from residents about their experiences, concerns, and ideas. That kind of face-to-face connection keeps us grounded and responsive.

We launched the new Climate Action Dashboard—a user-friendly tool that gives residents real-time access to progress on local sustainability efforts, including emissions data, project updates, and actionable steps you can take. This way, our climate work is visible, accountable, and participatory.

Finally, we are Architects of Joy.

This value of joy is about creating a place that works and feels good to be a part of.

In 2024, joy looked like new possibilities.

We finalized the long-awaited closing on the Trades District properties, unlocking future opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation.

We moved the Hopewell redevelopment into action, soon to bring new housing, greenspace, and community gathering places to a site that's long been waiting for new life.

We made long-awaited progress on expanding the Convention Center—finally moving from planning to action on a project the community has championed for years.

We acted quickly to seize one-time opportunities—investing \$2.5 million in long-overdue downtown street and sidewalk upgrades, using expiring CRED funds.

We upgraded ADA ramps, enhanced pedestrian safety, and made our downtown more accessible for everyone. Because joy looks like inclusion.

And yes—sometimes joy arrives when we least expect it.

Like IU Football's winning season.

It filled restaurants, packed downtown streets, and reminded us how powerful community spirit can be.

We can't control the scoreboard—but we can make sure Bloomington is ready when the spotlight shines.

These moments matter.

Joy lights the spark, pride fans the flame, and participation keeps the fire of community burning bright.

Whether through policy, partnerships, or simply showing up, this first year has been filled with meaningful progress—and meaningful listening.

We're proud of what we've built, but we're not finished.

At the heart of all of this is our shared commitment to service and teamwork—the principles that will continue to drive us forward.

And now, it's my pleasure to introduce someone who exemplifies that commitment—our Director of Human Resources, Dr. Sharr Pechac. Sharr has been instrumental in supporting and strengthening our team through a new compensation strategy that reflects our values.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Pechac.

Sharr Pechac:

Thank you, Mayor Thomson.

I'm excited to speak about one of the most important investments the City of Bloomington is making—our employees.

What We Discovered

When this administration came into office, it became clear that our internal systems—especially those regarding personnel policies and pay—weren't meeting the needs of our employees or serving our community.

We knew we needed to make some changes.

As we dug in, we heard directly from the staff:

Over half of them—51%—said salary, understaffing, and retention were their biggest issues.

Yet 76% said what kept them motivated at work was their team, the strong culture in their department, and the meaningful work they do every day.

Still, the systems meant to support them were outdated.

The City's personnel manual hadn't been updated in over a decade.

Pay grades had become stagnant and job descriptions hadn't been reviewed in years.

Our hiring process didn't consider experience, education, or the increasing workload of our employees.

Compensation practices were inconsistent.

Many HR systems were still paper-based, leading to errors and inefficiencies.

Our team had the talent and the drive, but they didn't have the tools or support.

It became clear that a reset was necessary.

What We've Accomplished

From the start, the administration prioritized HR systems and supporting employees.

It wasn't easy, but we got to work.

In 2024, we focused on improving HR partnerships, communication, and services.

With the leadership and support of the Office of the Mayor and the backing of City Council, we were able to secure approval for updated salary grades—a foundational step toward ensuring that our compensation is fair for everyone.

Importantly, we truly appreciate the patience of department heads and employees as we worked through these changes together.

It was a critical first step, and we should be proud of the progress we've made so far.

Here are some highlights of what we've accomplished:

We reviewed and regraded hundreds of city job descriptions, bringing clarity and consistency to roles that hadn't been updated in years.

Pay scales were adjusted to reflect employees' experience and time on the job so their work was fairly rewarded.

The open enrollment process was improved—covering not just pay but all the valuable employee benefits.

A new Employee Handbook was launched to replace the outdated manual from over a decade ago.

A committee of people from different departments across the City was set up to regularly review and update policies, ensuring they always serve both the workforce and the City effectively.

The AFSCME salary study was initiated so that all employee groups are included in the broader compensation improvements.

HR Partners from different departments met regularly to discuss challenges and collaborate on solutions.

Recruitment and onboarding improved, with clearer support in an employee's first year.

Employee Appreciation events were revamped to recognize employees at all levels, from interns to those with 20 or more years of service.

We're not alone in this work. Legal and the Office of the Mayor helped us negotiate new contracts for the Fire and Police Departments, both of which were approved unanimously.

Fire will be fully staffed this September when we welcome 2 probationary firefighters.

Police is making strong progress.

After announcing higher salaries and individual patrol vehicles, we saw our largest application pool *in years*. Eleven strong applicants are in process and, if all are hired, this will mark our biggest onboarding class in two decades.

What's Next

So, what's next?

In 2025, our focus is on making our HR practices more efficient and effective.

We continue to go digital, moving away from paper forms for faster, easier-to-use processes for a smooth behind-the-scenes operation.

We're streamlining and modernizing processes—from the start of an employee's journey to their exit—and everything in between.

We're standardizing consistent pay practices across the board.

Additionally, we're providing leadership training to foster continuous improvement in workplace environments.

Final Thoughts

This is just the beginning.

While there's still work to be done, we're committed to making sure our city government works for everyone—our employees and the people we serve.

Thank you to the Mayor, City Council, our HR team, consultants, department heads—and especially to our employees—for your patience, partnership, and continued dedication.

I look forward to what we can accomplish together in the future.

Mayor Kerry Thomson:

Sharr, thank you for your thoughtful leadership and commitment to Bloomington's promise of service and responsiveness.

With our shared values at the foundation and momentum on our side, let's look ahead—at what comes next, what challenges remain, and how we will continue leading with clarity and care.

One of our most urgent challenges is expanding access to housing and creating a city where *everyone* feels safe, supported, and at home.

Street homelessness is a crisis that affects us all—those experiencing it firsthand, the service providers working tirelessly to support them, and the business owners and residents navigating its impact.

We are not alone in this. We join communities across the nation facing the same crisis.

In Bloomington, we choose to act—with compassion, urgency, and lasting impact.

When I committed to serving as your mayor, I committed to finding solutions that prioritize respect and dignity.

That includes being honest about what's not working and courageous enough to fix it at the root.

I will not keep pouring dollars and resources into temporary fixes. We need real solutions—and we need them now.

At the start of 2024, I convened local housing experts, Heading Home, and frontline service providers to request a clear, community-driven, data-informed response. Together, they delivered the Housing Action Plan.

This plan is already in motion and strikes the right balance between immediate action and long-term strategy:

It prioritizes coordinated outreach—so people don't fall through the cracks.

It calls for more case managers—so support is consistent and centered on human connection.

It demands more medical respite care for individuals too sick to be on the streets but not eligible for hospitalization.

It focuses on prevention—keeping people housed before a crisis hits.

It aims to increase deeply affordable housing and bolster security and services for permanent supportive housing to prevent re-entry into homelessness.

It emphasizes regional collaboration—to address inflow from surrounding counties and strengthen our collective response.

And it calls for a thoughtful assessment of our shelter capacity—so we can responsibly meet local needs without overwhelming our system.

This plan is collaborative and evolving—owned and created by the experts. It has my full support, and I know our partners will implement it, assess its impact, and refine it as we learn.

I made a clear promise and I'm keeping it: City funding will go only to organizations and community partners aligned with this coordinated framework.

If you're not part of the solution, you won't be part of the funding.

When we bring compassion, collaboration, and commitment to the table, real change is within reach.

But it's just one piece of the puzzle.

Across the board, we need more housing for the people who work here, contribute to this community, and want to call Bloomington home.

One way we're tackling this challenge is by doing the necessary work behind the scenes—cleaning up longstanding issues that had been ignored for too long—issues that were stalling progress, wasting resources, and putting future investments at risk.

When I took office, the Housing and Neighborhood Development Department was in crisis: out of alignment with federal funding requirements, falling short of its mission and failing the community it was meant to serve.

My top priority was housing, yet the department charged with doing the work was far from equipped to achieve progress.

Years of inconsistent leadership had led to four federal audits in just 12 months. That's highly unusual and deeply concerning. Those audits uncovered outdated practices, compliance failures, and development deals that didn't deliver on promises—especially when it came to workforce housing.

We had to act decisively to protect our federal partnerships and the integrity of our housing work moving forward.

We inherited dysfunction—but we didn't flinch. We fixed it.

I'm proud to share—after a year of intensive effort—we have officially closed out all monitorings.

Many thanks to Anna Killion-Hanson and her team.

We have turned a major corner.

Our team overhauled policies and procedures, completed compliance training, implemented new software, and renewed its focus to the work that matters most: delivering housing support that impacts lives every day.

In addition to these internal improvements, HAND has continued to deliver support that directly impacts residents.

Over the past year, this administration has supported the creation of new homes, the preservation of affordable rentals, and the rehabilitation of existing housing stock.

HAND has helped first-time homebuyers, prevented foreclosures, expanded access to housing counseling, and supported vulnerable populations—including survivors of domestic violence and those experiencing homelessness.

We've invested in land acquisition and lot development to ensure future pathways to affordable homeownership—partnering with organizations like Beacon to create their new shelter and the Bloomington Housing Authority.

Last fall, our administration launched an inclusive, community-wide outreach effort to shape Bloomington's new Consolidated Plan—a federally required roadmap that guides how we invest in housing and community development.

We led *nine* public outreach sessions and continued targeted discussions with key partners.

These conversations are critical to ensure the plan reflects the real needs of our residents and positions us to direct federal resources where they'll have the greatest impact.

This hands-on, boots-on-the-ground strategy is how we turn housing goals into real, everyday impact—meeting people where they are, when they need it most.

At the same time, we are revisiting our permitting process and our Unified Development Ordinance, or the UDO—a set of rules that guide how and where development happens in Bloomington— a process that will include its own public input opportunities.

These updates will support the housing our community truly needs, all while keeping development on a responsible path.

As we explore policy changes, we're making sure there's a solid process for you to weigh in—to co-create solutions.

We want to make certain your voice is not only heard but actively shapes the outcome.

That future is already taking shape in places like the Summit District, where there's an opportunity for creative development focused on sustainable, walkable communities.

We're exploring partnerships that ensure a healthy mix of market-rate and affordable housing, striking a balance to meet our city's needs.

Housing is medicine.

When we invest in housing, infrastructure, and economic opportunity, we're not just addressing today's challenges—we're building a city where *everyone* can thrive.

And *that's* a future worth working toward.

As I mentioned earlier, transparency and engagement are how we are leading.

Every decision we make—from policies to budgets—should be clear, accessible, and, most importantly, shaped by the people we serve.

A government that listens and then acts is a government that works.

Over the past year, we've expanded direct engagement opportunities and increased public input in decision-making.

I've kept my promise to take City Hall into the community each month—through Traveling Town Halls with Cabinet and Councilmembers, one-on-one Office Hours, and listening sessions with nonprofits and faith leaders.

I've worked to make it easier for residents and community leaders to ask questions, raise concerns, and engage directly with their government.

What's been most encouraging is that these conversations are often filled with people who have never set foot in City Hall before—voices that are new to the process, and essential to the solutions.

When I ran for Mayor, I promised to listen, to discern, and then to lead. That remains my commitment—especially when the decisions are big and the stakes are high.

That commitment doesn't shift based on what's happening in other branches of government. Real progress requires real dialogue—not decisions made behind closed doors.

When tackling complex challenges, my administration is committed to co-creating solutions. We know the best ideas emerge when we work together—when we improve one another's thinking through open, inclusive dialogue. That's hard to do when public input is limited to a few minutes on a proposal that's already been developed with no current public engagement.

And yes, those conversations can be uncomfortable. However, I refuse to shy away from complexity—instead, I am committed to leaning into it together.

I know that not everyone will always get their way. But we will do what we said we'd do—and we'll do it in the open, with the public, and for the people.

Decisions should be shaped by public input, not politics.

The work ahead is too important to let division define us.

So let's choose a better path. Let's keep showing up, side by side, and ready to collaborate. Together, I think we might be surprised that the solutions we co-create are much better than the ones we started with on our own.

And, let's not forget transparency isn't just about being available—it's also about access to information.

Over the past year, we've taken a hard look at how we respond to public records requests and found real opportunities to improve both our processes and our customer service.

I've also focused on how people find information in the first place—simplifying procedures, removing bureaucratic hurdles, and proactively sharing documents, data, and decisions before someone even has to ask.

At the core of this effort is my belief that residents should be treated like valued customers. When we lead with service and stay accountable to taxpayers, we build trust—and make government feel a little more human.

Looking ahead, we're planning a full overhaul of the City's website to improve navigation and ease of access.

We have launched a Citywide Digital Accessibility Strategic Plan, beginning with a comprehensive audit to ensure all residents—including those with disabilities—can access critical services and information.

Every decision, project, and investment should be easy to understand and easy to track. If something's unclear—we want to know.

So what's next? A thriving Bloomington doesn't happen accidentally—it requires careful planning, smart investments, and a long-term vision.

A one-year budget alone can't support the scale of what Bloomington needs for its long-term future.

We must develop long-term financial strategies that fund recurring expenses, capital projects, and the infrastructure that underpins our daily lives.

Under my direction, our Cabinet delivered comprehensive action plans in several areas—public safety, infrastructure, and economic development—as well as major initiatives like Hopewell, the Trades District, fiber and data upgrades, park renovations, and new public safety facilities.

Sustainability—fiscal, social, and operational—requires clear planning and collective commitment.

Behind every well-functioning city is a strong Public Works department. They keep Bloomington running—clearing snow, filling potholes, managing sanitation.

Their work is critical to community pride, business investment, and community safety.

Yet ours operates out of outdated facilities and faces a \$3 million annual shortfall just to maintain current road conditions.

Over the past year, it's become clear just how long this investment was neglected—pushed aside, under-prioritized, and overdue.

For decades, Bloomington hasn't kept up with the necessary maintenance grade for our streets, and the consequences are catching up to us. If we want Bloomington to function at its highest level, we must act now.

We've prioritized and invested in modern facilities for Fire and soon will do the same for Police. Public Works deserves no less.

Outdated systems are holding us back.

The same is true for our most essential resource: water.

When I took office, the Monroe Water Plant was also facing over \$10 million in needed repairs, with delayed funding decisions leaving critical infrastructure vulnerable.

We acted—bringing in Wessler Engineering to assess the system, prioritize repairs, and create a clear, actionable roadmap to secure Bloomington's water future.

We're seeing the effects of growing without long-term maintenance planning.

Parks like Powerline Trail, the Bryan Park playground, and soon, Hopewell Commons, are beautiful additions and a great sense of pride for our community—but they come with rising operational costs and budget pressures, including for security and upkeep.

In response, our Parks and Recreation Department is undergoing a full master planning process to chart a smarter, more sustainable path forward—so that as we continue to grow, we maintain and care for what we've built.

We can't afford to kick the can down the road.

Our administration has the opportunity and the responsibility to invest wisely right now. Our quality of life depends on it.

In each case, the need is clear: we must invest now to avoid higher costs—and deeper consequences—later.

When our city runs well, businesses thrive, jobs grow, and Bloomington becomes an even better place to live, work, and play.

I am focused on attracting new businesses while also supporting the incredible entrepreneurial spirit in our community.

As part of that work, we've prioritized something that's long been overlooked: how Bloomington presents itself to the world.

Thriving economies are built on identity. Our story, our values, our sense of place shape the way we grow and who chooses to grow with us.

As of last month and over the next year, we are engaged in a comprehensive city and place branding initiative in collaboration with consultants and most importantly, in deep partnership with the people of Bloomington.

Let me be clear that this is far more than a logo or marketing campaign. This is about uncovering the compelling and authentic narrative of who we are as a community and what makes Bloomington distinct, magnetic, and meaningful.

That matters for economic development and this work is long overdue.

The 2016 Wage Growth Task Force report recommended that the City work to brand Bloomington—recognizing how important identity and perception are to economic growth.

Yet, despite that call to action nine long years ago, no progress has been made—until now.

Under our leadership, we've taken the first real steps to build a cohesive identity that makes Bloomington more competitive—attracting businesses, talent, and visitors who align with our values and contribute to a strong, values-driven economy.

When people understand what Bloomington stands for, when they see their own values reflected in our identity, they're more likely to stay, to invest, and to contribute.

These efforts—investing in housing, increasing transparency, maintaining financial health, supporting our economy, and telling Bloomington's story—are all connected.

They're part of one vision: a vibrant, inclusive, forward-moving Bloomington built on a foundation of strength and shared opportunity.

Now, I'd like to turn it over to Jane Kupersmith, our Director of Economic and Sustainable Development, who will share how we're driving this economic growth.

Jane Kupersmith:

Hi everyone! I'm really glad to be here with you tonight and honored to be part of this hard-working administration

Our job at Economic and Sustainable Development is to create the conditions for a strong, resilient, and thriving Bloomington.

Current economic pressures do not make our work any easier.

Despite national headwinds, we've stayed focused, and we've delivered: reducing housing barriers, securing outside investments, and making long-term, strategic commitments to Bloomington's future.

It's not always easy, but our team shows up, follows through, and gets results.

The Trades District continues to grow as a hub for Bloomington's tech sector.

Last November, we completed The Forge, a 22,000-square-foot, LEED silver office space supported partly by an EDA grant. It's already advancing our strategy to attract and scale tech businesses and foster collaboration in the district.

And we're just getting started.

With the \$16 million College and Community Collaboration grant from the Lilly Endowment, IU, the Mill, and the City will continue to advance that same work—developing remaining parcels, formalizing and improving connections between campus and downtown, and installing six new public art pieces.

More big Trades District wins: We just wrapped construction for the commercial tenants in the Trades Garage.

The Kiln building, developed by the Kiln Collective, came online in 2024 and looks incredible.

Finally, the installation of the long-awaited Stefan Reiss OT 987 Trades gateway sculpture began this week at 10th & Madison. We hope you can join us and our many incredible partners—including the artists—for a launch party on April 10th from 6-9 PM.

Speaking of the ARTS, we know that creative economies are strong economies.

Supporting artists helps culture and commerce grow hand in hand.

In 2024 we formalized a partnership with Secretly Group to build out 10,000 square feet of affordable studio space to create The Incubator and provide artists with the tools, space and support they need.

This photo is of Julie Schenkelberg's piece, which was created during her residency at the incubator and was on display at the Grunwald Gallery last month. The incubator will formally launch this fall.

Turning next to HOPEWELL—In 2024, Mayor Thomson led a strategic reset of the Hopewell development to ensure it delivered on its promise to the community.

The Redevelopment Commission issued an updated Public Offering on Hopewell South and Hopewell East, moving us toward a thoughtful, inclusive development.

Construction of Hopewell Commons is now complete, including a greenspace, a 1% for the arts piece by Jon Racek that will begin installation this summer, and yes—temporary pickleball courts.

Please join us on April 23 to celebrate Hopewell Commons. We'll also host another public information session late spring for a full project download.

Incredible progress was seen in 2024 toward the convention center expansion.

The interlocal agreement was signed; new appointments were made to the Capital Improvement Board. The design is in its final stages and site prep work is under way with construction on the horizon.

The CIB selected Dora Hospitality as the hotel developer, and the convention center received a new name—the Bloomington Convention Center.

Perhaps most importantly, the Bloomington City Council has made an incredible commitment to issue bonds to support the construction of the convention center.

This investment will be transformative for our community—whether for the jobs that will be created to manage and support convention center operations; the dollars that it will attract into our local economy; the center's dedication to the arts; or for the positive impact of off-cycle business activity.

Emerging from these projects is a picture of future Bloomington with discrete neighborhoods connected along the B-Line, each with a unique identity to offer residents and visitors.

Turning now to climate:

There isn't enough time to cover the City's climate work. But I wanted to give you some quick hits of what our sustainability team and our many incredible partners have been up to:

We partnered with NOAA and CAPA Strategies to conduct Bloomington's first-ever Heat Mapping & Air Quality Study, giving us critical, neighborhood-led data to guide future investments.

This data is already shaping projects like Cool Corridors, which kicked off last month with tree planting in the Crestmont neighborhood in partnership with Canopy Bloomington.

We expanded Stay Cool Bloomington, a program that increased safety on high-heat days with free AC units, more than 16,000 free pool admissions, and access to cooling centers.

We've helped homeowners and small businesses go solar, boost energy efficiency, and save money on utility bills. We also helped 21 low-income individuals get new e-bikes for green, affordable commutes across the city.

We also advanced Project 46, our regional climate alliance with Columbus, Nashville, and key partners like Cummins, IU Health, and IU Environmental Resilience Institute.

This work is ambitious, but it will only be successful if we do it together. So we're asking you to join us.

And with that, I'll pass the mic back to Mayor Thomson!

Mayor Kerry Thomson:

Thank you, Jane. Your visionary leadership has been instrumental in bringing us to this point.

As tonight's State of the City concludes, I am filled with pride and gratitude for all we've accomplished together and I'm energized by the opportunities ahead.

Reflecting on the past year, I'm reminded of the ground we've covered: the progress made, the challenges we've faced head-on, and the discoveries made along the way. Many of those discoveries—about our systems, our culture, and our assumptions—weren't easy. But they were essential.

We've chosen to face them with transparency and accountability, and in doing so, we've begun to lay a stronger foundation. One built on shared values, a renewed sense of purpose, and a deep commitment to the people of Bloomington.

My promise remains this: to lead a city government that is open, responsive, and built to serve the people who call Bloomington home. A city where barriers are removed, ideas are welcomed with

compassion and curiosity, and collaboration is our first instinct.

We've made more progress than a single speech can capture and that's the kind of challenge every city should be lucky to have.

Our team has delivered in big, meaningful ways, but the best is yet to come.

Earlier this evening, Director Shatoyia Moss opened this program by grounding us in the significance of the Waldron Arts Center—an iconic space that has continually reinvented itself in service to Bloomington.

This building respects our roots and embraces transformation, which go hand in hand. That's what makes us resilient. That's what makes us Bloomington.

Yes, there is still work ahead, but the foundation has been laid. The Bloomington I believe in is one built not just by policies and plans, but by people. People like you.

In a time when so many are pushed to the margins, we must choose to be a center of gravity for belonging, for hope, and for possibility.

A city is strongest when its people are seen, heard, and empowered.

That's not idealism, it's leadership.

I'm listening. I'll keep learning. And I'll keep doing the work of building a city where everyone has a place and a purpose.

And I hope you'll keep showing up—because Bloomington is better with you in it.

Thank you once again for being here tonight, for your commitment, and for your continued engagement. We are stepping ahead into a new chapter brimming with hope and momentum.

Now, to close out this evening, I am excited to introduce a performance by Girls Rock Bloomington.

This incredible organization empowers young women through music education and creative expression, embodying the spirit of innovation, joy, and collaboration that we hold dear in this city.

Please join me in welcoming Amy Oelsner, the founder and director of Girls Rock Bloomington, who will introduce the band.