

1988 STATE OF THE CITY SPEECH

Good afternoon, President Smith, members of the City Council, and friends. I come to you today, directed by the City Charter, to report on the state of the City. I am pleased to report that, by traditional measures, the State of the City is healthy and strong. The economy is good and growing; the budget balanced; our reserves solid; and our taxes relatively low. But you and I know that the state of our City is more than fiscal condition. The state of the City must be measured in terms of the state of our citizens. It is also the state of our neighborhoods; and increasingly the state of our region. *Mostly, though, the state of our* City is the state of our collective spirit. This spirit is driven deep into our sense of place, culture, and history. Our spirit is diverse beyond description.

Each year at this time I have taken the opportunity to recognize our spirit and reflect on our past and on our future.

The past reminds us of the lasting strengths: the values that do not change as rapidly as the skyline. As I reviewed the activities of the last decade, I was struck by the lasting, practical values of Seattle's people:

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- o First, our independence and creativity allow us to find unique solutions to issues facing every American city. Not because we're smarter, but because we seem to have learned long ago that the best answers are those we develop ourselves.
- o Second, we do our best work when we follow a thoughtful community process that involves residents from every corner of the City. We relish public debate and our best solutions come from harmonizing divergent viewpoints.
- o And lastly, we have set priorities; good ones:
 - (1) Concern for the less fortunate;
 - (2) Protection of the environment; and
 - (3) Respect for our diversity.

When we believe an issue will affect the basic quality of our City, we have shown a willingness to tax ourselves to protect Seattle's character.

These practical values have produced a remarkable ten years of achievement and must serve as the signposts for the decade that lies ahead.

I have thought about these values and our spirit in preparing for these remarks. I must report there are

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unsettling signs. The spirit is restless. There is a sense of unease.

I believe it comes from the perception of rapid change. Growth. Growth is the issue. Our concern about growth takes many different forms. It surfaces in a discussion about a height limit for downtown skyscrapers; in the effort to preserve open space; in the debate over the need for a human services levy; or in a decision to change neighborhood zoning. In each form, the message is the same -- we are concerned about growth. Some feel quality slipping away. We are looking at big problems. It was ever thus. Less than 20 years ago they were problems of no growth. In a city that had the nation's highest unemployment rate, you could park downtown. Today we face the problems of growth. You can't park downtown. There are too many people going to work, or shopping, or delivering steel girders, or burrowing new streets underground. Of course, these new problems challenge our spirit, our values, the way we do things. Consensus is harder to come by. The voices are sometimes strident. We are wrestling with a vision of what we want to become. That's healthy. What's not so healthy is the way the debate is going -- growth vs. no growth.

To get back to equilibrium we must understand the growth that has occurred and will continue to occur. Between 1980

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and 1987 King County's population grew by 115,000. That's equivalent to two new cities the size of Everett. The four county region -- King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap -- has grown by 245,000 over the past seven years.

Along with population growth we have had healthy economic growth. Between 1983 and 1987, 133,000 net new jobs were created in King County. That's a new job for every man, woman, and child who has moved here, with a large supply of jobs left over. In the past seven years, 18,000 housing units have been constructed. In the last year alone, 4,000 new housing units were built in Seattle.

Our economy is strong, but it has driven rapid change -- change that brings a certain restlessness to our spirit. A look ahead to the next decade does nothing to ease our restlessness.

According to the Puget Sound Council of Governments, between 1980 and the year 2020, the four-county region is expected to grow by nearly two million people. King County alone expects to account for more than 850,000 of our new neighbors -- that's equivalent to the entire City of San Diego moving to King County over the next 32 years. But how does that affect a city whose population is projected to remain roughly constant over the next 15-20 years?

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Why should a Lake City or Georgetown resident be concerned about a new shopping center in Silverdale or housing development on the east Sammamish plateau?

The answer is simple. The growth beyond our boundaries reaches into every Seattle neighborhood and affects each of our lives. Ask a Mount Baker resident what he likes about Seattle and he's just as likely to describe the nearby mountains, water, and farmlands as he is his strong, independent neighborhood. Ask a Lake City resident what frustrates her about her neighborhood and you might hear about traffic clogging the streets as commuters head for homes in Bothell or Woodinville.

Our region's growth has touched each of us in very practical ways. In what we see -- and don't see anymore. In how we get to work. In our new job, and the people we pass in the doorways. This rapid growth bothers us because it brings a sense of uncertainty about our future.

The people of Seattle are asking a very important and complicated question: How can we maintain a strong economy and still preserve the unique character of Seattle and protect our area's environment? How can we grow and still be us? That is the challenge before us. That is what I want to talk about today.

THE AGENDA

The agenda for the years ahead is ambitious. The questions related to growth are as challenging as they come. Crime, the environment, traffic, and land use have no simple solutions. But reliance on our community's fundamental spirit -- caring, independence, political consensus, and collective priorities -- will help us to meet the challenges of regional growth.

MOUNTAIN TO SOUND

Our top priority this year must be the Mountain to Sound bond issue and levy proposals. This fall voters will be asked to approve funding for a creative package of rural and urban open space and access to the water. Residents of this region have a century long commitment to the preservation of open space. We've created buffers around neighborhoods and breathing room between cities, and we've protected our shorelines.

But growth has put a strain on our prized open spaces. We can no longer take them for granted. Even our beloved Burke-Gilman Trail has been threatened. We just concluded an agreement in principle with Burlington Northern and we won't lose that Seattle treasure. But the events of this

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year have underscored the urgency of our mission to preserve open space.

Thanks in large part to Paul Kraabel's efforts, one of the special features of the Mountain to Sound proposal is the restoration of our harborfront as a major urban people place. After five years of careful study by a diverse collection of citizens, we have before us the opportunity to reclaim our once proud waterfront.

Historically, Seattle's harbor has been the center of our economy. Fishing, cargo, and passenger ships of all sizes and shapes once pumped life and money into Seattle. But in recent years we have neglected this doorway to our City. We have not treated this special place with the care it deserves. As a result, we have witnessed the sad sight of piers along our harbor collapsing into the water.

But as often happens in Seattle, a group of citizens saw the waterfront's potential. They saw it as a park and a place for all of us. Their idea was simple -- they envisioned a harborfront of parks, boats, and public facilities that would restore our zest for the waterfront.

This fall's ballot will also include \$24.6 million to restore and expand the Seattle Aquarium. The Aquarium is our direct link to that gleaming, blue open space on our

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western shores. Every year millions of people enjoy Puget Sound's wonders -- on boats, or on foot along the shore. But only a few, equipped with oxygen tanks, can see below its surface. The Aquarium is the place most of us go to enjoy the miracles of life below the sea. It allows us, and 40,000 King County school children the opportunity to learn and to explore the fascinations of tidepools and big fish. But the Aquarium is too small, outdated, and needs repair. This Fall we have the opportunity to restore the Aquarium and enlarge our window on the Sound.

Along with the Aquarium, the Fall ballot will also provide the opportunity to acquire and develop rural and urban greenbelts, open space, and trails. This is not the first time the Aquarium, greenbelts, and open space have been presented as a united package to our voters. In 1968 the Forward Thrust bond issue financed our present Aquarium, Waterfront Park, greenbelts in Seattle, the first segments of the Burke-Gilman Trail, as well as open space, parks, and trails throughout King County. With these funds, and other local resources, Seattle has protected more than 400 acres of greenbelts -- more than half of the identified greenbelts in our City. In 1968 the voters of our County recognized the commonality of these vital public interests. I firmly believe, on this 20th Anniversary of Forward Thrust, the voters will want to reaffirm that investment.

The Mountains to Sound measure is such an investment in our future. It is a vital response to our concerns about urban growth. It will help to preserve the waterfront, trails and open spaces that we all cherish.

CRIME

Rapid change and increasing population densities have another effect on our City and our region. Rapid growth not only threatens our treasured open space, it also threatens our private space -- our security. You can't sit in a Seattle home or business today without hearing people's fears about crime.

The current drug related crime wave is sweeping across America's cities. Crack houses and gangs are modern day versions of locusts spreading from one large city to another. Crime rates are up nationwide. Gang activity is simply terrifying. But when it's your house that's been burglarized so your neighbor's kid can pay for drugs, it's no consolation to hear that the problems are worse in Los Angeles or Chicago. Seattle citizens want to know what we're doing here at home, and what they can do to fight this epidemic.

We're responding in Seattle's way; we're fighting back as a team, unified in spirit and in purpose. In the last

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three years, with Norm Rice's assistance, the police budget has increased by nearly 20 percent. I currently have a proposal before the City Council for four anti-drug teams. If the Council approves funding we will have a valuable tool to fight illegal drug activity in each of our precincts.

Other City departments are also lending a hand. I approach this as more than a police problem. It's a City problem and it requires a team effort. The Department of Construction and Land Use is working with the Police to get tough on vacant houses that become drug havens. And the Police together with the City Attorney's Office are closing down buildings that have turned into drug drive-ins. With Dolores Sibonga's leadership, we have just approved longer summer hours and more staffing for community recreation centers. The Department of Human Resources Youth Employment programs and the library's new reading programs will help keep children and young adults active and off the streets.

And not only our City Departments are working together, but our team includes other agencies, such as the Seattle School District and the Seattle Housing Authority.

Seattle Public Schools staff have worked with community, business, the Police, and other County and City representatives to implement an action plan to prevent drug use and

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treat drug abuse to get our kids on the road to productive drug free lives.

The Seattle Housing Authority and the Police have worked together to help low-income residents keep control of their communities. SHA is working with residents through hotlines and reports of suspicious activity in their collective fight against drugs. The Housing Authority is providing assistance to tenants who want to solve their drug abuse problems and evicting those tenants who continue to be involved with illegal drugs.

While increasing the police budget and developing new City programs are an appropriate response, they are not the solution. Chief Fitzsimons will be the first to tell you that the police are only the foot soldiers in the war against crime. The real power comes from a united community.

Encouraging news comes from the neighborhoods. Seattle residents are responding to drugs with their traditional leadership and independence. In three separate neighborhoods residents have said they've had enough. In south Seattle community organizations formed a task force to work directly with the South Precinct. They're winning the fight to regain control over their neighborhoods. In Matthews Beach,

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in the North End, neighbors began reporting license plate numbers of drug dealers cruising their communities. And in Queen Anne, residents scraped together dollars and volunteers to tear down a structure that had become a haven for drug dealing. In partnership with us, they turned the space into a popular playground for children.

There are no quick fixes in the fight against crime. We must work with our courts, we must work with the County to build new jail space. Drug abuse is a long haul problem. It is a national problem. As we've learned in South Seattle and Matthews Beach, the best solutions are developed working together. Only with a united effort among all governmental agencies and communities can we regain control of our streets and neighborhoods and give our children a chance for the future.

SEATTLE'S GROWTH MANAGEMENT:

MAINTAINING PERSPECTIVE

Uncertainty and a perceived lack of control over the larger environment causes people to react to protect their own turf. So it is that much of today's debate over growth focuses on restricting it by shutting down housing in our multi-family neighborhoods and slashing development potential in the downtown. The debate reminds me of the guy in the

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movie Network -- "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it any more." While the strains our citizens feel are real, we must not overreact. Rather, we must return to the values that form our spirit and carefully deliberate these hard questions.

We have begun a process to review our multi-family land use policies; five years of experience have taught us that there are unanticipated affects of the code and we must correct it. But I caution against wholesale downzones that will add to housing sprawl in the suburbs and drive up the price of housing in the City. It's a matter of protecting low and moderate income people.

When total housing supply expands, affordable rental units for lower income families open up as moderate income families move into home ownership. Where housing supply is static and tight, competition for the limited number of available units is decided by wealth alone, and the neediest families suffer the most. Housing affordability must be a major concern guiding our decisions as the land use plan review proceeds.

We can fix the mistakes in our multi-family code, but we must weigh our neighborhood decisions in the broad perspective of the region as a whole. We cannot afford to

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shut our doors; it costs our citizens in loss of farmlands and rural areas as housing sprawls further to the east; it costs our neighborhoods as we generate more commuter traffic through our streets; and it costs Seattle ratepayers as we extend sewers for more new development in the County. We must be prepared to accept higher densities in some of our neighborhoods while ensuring that development is sensitive to Seattle's existing character.

The loudest debate in our community is focused on our smallest neighborhood -- downtown. It's ironic that so much of our attention has been focused on less than 2% of our land mass. Downtown is important to Seattle neighborhoods and County residents alike. This thirty blocks represents more than 25 percent of the City's assessed property value and nearly 10 percent of the total assessed value Countywide. Add sales and business taxes and this little neighborhood pays about a third of the City's bills.

Yet, tall buildings and downtown construction have become a symbol for much of what frustrates our people about growth. Sitting in a traffic jam, fuming about the dinner that's getting cold, the skyscraper in your rear window adds insult to injury. Nonetheless, proposals for restrictive limits on downtown growth are sorely misguided. They are directed at the symptoms, not the problems.

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Building limits will not ease traffic congestion, reduce suburban sprawl, or preserve open space. In fact, it can be argued they will have the opposite effect. If growth of the downtown core is narrowly restricted, the pressure to build office and retail space will creep into our neighborhoods and boom in the suburbs.

Development goes with people. It's not complicated. As more people move to our region -- and they will -- the development demand will grow. Rather than try to push development where it's costly to support, we should concentrate it where we're ready for it: where we have the streets, utilities, human services, and mass transit in place.

Again, our debate must be deliberative and balanced to build a consensus, and we must not overreact. Let me give two perspectives on the debate.

First, the steady growth of downtown and other commercial areas has been a major contributor to the health of our neighborhoods. The notion of conflict between downtown and our residential neighborhoods is false and divisive; they are mutually interdependent.

Between 1983 and 1988, the City's general fund budget experienced real revenue growth of nearly \$23 million -- \$23

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million in growth dollars. This, at a time when our federal partner had pulled out and we were on our own to find ways to pay for our basic services and respond to growing human need.

The link between those largely downtown growth dollars and neighborhood services is dramatic. Of the \$23 million, almost \$9 million went to public safety -- improving police and fire services. Nearly \$4 million was used to create a new survival services fund for community-based health, shelter, and food programs. \$3.5 million was used to improve annual street, park, and facility maintenance activities, and more than \$2 million was used for City health, recreation, and human service programs.

Crime prevention, community improvements, and human service programs -- if that sounds like a Rainier Beach or Wallingford platform, it is. Our neighborhood platform was built on growth dollars.

Secondly, criticism of growth downtown ignores the fact that almost all new development has been built under the old rules. Seattle residents and the City Council spent hundreds of hours writing a consensus plan for downtown. So far, only one new office building has been built under the new plan. The 1201 Third Avenue Building is opening to

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rave reviews from citizens and architectural critics alike. Under the bonus provision of the new plan, the 1201 Building will produce a daycare center; 275 units of housing, including nearly 200 units for low-income people; and a strong transportation program to encourage carpools. The downtown plan will create more of these benefits if it is allowed to work.

SHARING THE BENEFITS OF GROWTH

While downtown is a powerful economic engine, the benefits of growth are not always reaching those most in need. Our spirit is troubled by the knowledge that our shelters are full and lines at our food banks are long. Recently, Archbishop Hunthausen spoke out about these injustices. The Archbishop, as he often does, struck a responsive chord in many of us. He challenged all of us to do a better job of spreading the wealth of our current good fortune.

Rather than trying to stop development downtown, we should be attempting to harness it, better directing the value it creates toward the values we hold as a community.

Our current efforts are substantial. The \$50 million low-income housing levy will produce its first units this

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year -- on schedule. One thousand units will be built or rehabilitated over the next eight years, including 305 units downtown. The City's Human Services Fund, which provides support for more than 16 clinics, 18 emergency shelters, and 26 food banks, has reached an all time high of \$8.5 million. Our homeless strategy has begun to pay off; later this year we will open the Westlake Hotel for chronically homeless elderly men.

Despite these programs to spread the benefits of urban growth, we must do more. Our spirit demands it.

Three weeks ago, I announced the formation of a citizen's committee to examine growth in downtown from a regional perspective. I have asked them to recommend new ways to transfer more of the benefits of growth to all our citizens.

The committee will look for ways to tie new construction to the creation of jobs, low-income housing, and parks. They will also recommend actions to preserve and create low income housing following the lifting of the moratorium on demolition of downtown low-income units. Their recommendations will be sent to me before the end of the year.

Another important piece of our strategy must focus on reform of our tax system. For starters, we must recognize

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how few of our tax dollars we control. Two-thirds of all the taxes collected in Seattle go to the federal government, more than 20 percent to the State. Few of those growth driven dollars come back to our City for priority City programs.

The taxes we do control are limited and unfair. The State tax system results in low-income families paying a greater share of their income than wealthy families. It is a system that discourages expansion of small businesses -- the real source of economic growth. And it generates fewer dollars when public needs are greater -- when unemployment is high and the economy is stagnant.

The Governor's Committee on Washington's Financial Future is examining the strengths and weaknesses of our tax system. As a member of that committee, I hope to help move us forward on tax reform. A fair and equitable tax structure is best for the City and the region, and is the right of every citizen.

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TRANSPORTATION

Another right of every citizen is the right of mobility. Traffic congestion, like most of the growth issues, knows no government boundaries. It's as frustrating on 405 as it is on I-5. The two-lane roads of Redmond, where early morning golfers once shared space with farmers on tractors, are now jammed with people who drive to their high tech jobs at Microsoft from homes in the University District, Leschi, and Capitol Hill.

Today, I'd like to suggest strategies to move forward on two of our most pressing regional transportation concerns: agreement on the future of Highway 520 -- The Evergreen Point Bridge -- and much faster movement on regional light rail.

First, Highway 520. The problems related to 520 are Seattle neighborhood problems. Whether it's air and noise pollution, or getting overflow traffic off neighborhood streets, it is a neighborhood issue. The University District and the Montlake community are good examples. Traffic congestion often reaches gridlock. On the worst of days it can take as long to drive across the bridge as it takes to sail from Medina to Portage Bay.

As the freeway fills, the arterials and side streets become jammed with cars attempting to cut 10 minutes off

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their commute. The rush hour has become the rush morning or rush afternoon. I have proposed four principals to guide our efforts on 520:

1. There should be no expansion of the bridge for additional automobile capacity.
2. We will consider extra bridge capacity only for mass transit or light rail.
3. We should examine mitigation measures for future traffic impacts and fix first the mess they created for Seattle neighborhoods when 520 was constructed.
4. Neighborhood representatives from both sides of the lake should be involved in developing solutions.

If we can structure a strategy around these four principles I'm convinced we can move to resolve the traffic jams and protect our neighborhood interests.

As a drive across 520 suggests, the time has come for our region to seriously consider construction of a light rail system. We've taken the first important step with the construction of the new bus tunnel. The tunnel, thanks in part to George Benson's efforts, will be equipped with tracks for a future rail system. We are buying the first piece of our 21st century rail system with 1985 dollars.

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It's a good buy. Think of it, we've already laid the tracks through the toughest part of the system -- the downtown. That's a tremendous head start.

Some feel we ought to wait until the year 2020 before we begin building a rail system. But by then the County's population growth will choke our highways and neighborhood streets. We need to get to light rail a lot sooner, and do it together with careful attention to land use issues. I will work with Jeanette Williams to persuade our neighbors to move our schedule into this decade. I will also work with the Governor and the State Legislature to make rail planning an eligible use of State gas tax money.

HUMAN SERVICES ROUNDTABLE

But, good management of future regional growth is more than discussion of land use and transportation. As the region grows, we must also plan together for our human service needs.

Traditionally, Seattle has been the hub of the County's social service wheel. We've housed and cared for a majority of the County's elderly. Our shelters, food banks, and clinics have provided a life support system for the most needy residents of both the City and the County. Meeting

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the needs of the poor has been viewed as Seattle's responsibility.

But times are changing. Over the next 15 years the number of low income families will grow faster in the suburbs than in Seattle. Our suburban neighbors are also facing an unprecedented growth in the number of elderly residents. Into the 1990's the number of senior citizens living in King County suburbs will increase by 30%. The "graying of the suburbs" will create dramatic new challenges for these communities. In addition, the number of suburban preschool children who need daycare will grow dramatically over the next decade.

These facts represent urgent problems for King County. Few suburbs have developed the funding mechanisms, delivery systems, or transportation services to meet these growing human service needs.

This does not suggest that Seattle's traditional role as provider of services for the poor will be reduced or transferred to the suburbs. Instead, what it suggests is that for the first time Seattle and its suburban neighbors will have strikingly similar human service interests, and strikingly similar political objectives. There is already a significant coalition forming.

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The Human Services Roundtable is a Countywide movement that taps the energies and talents of local elected officials, human service providers, business people, and interested citizens to come up with a regional action agenda. They have been operating without much fanfare, but in many ways it's quite revolutionary. The fact that Bellevue and Seattle now share many of the same housing and social service needs is remarkable.

The Human Services Roundtable deserves our strong support. They will propose funding strategies which may give Seattle new allies in our constant fight to find new resources for medical assistance to the working poor; shelter for the homeless; affordable child care for low-income families; early intervention and prevention programs for children at risk; concerted educational and public health programs to address the tragedy of AIDS; and support services for the elderly.

The Human Services Roundtable can also be a catalyst to help us ensure that future services are located where people live. As growth occurs primarily outside Seattle we must tackle the new needs of our communities and take care not to overload fragile areas, like Pioneer Square, simply because those areas traditionally served troubled people. Increasingly, our burden is to effectively share

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responsibility for addressing human services needs on a Countywide basis.

CONCLUSION

Our spirit, like our City, is healthy and strong. There is a certain restlessness there, but that too is healthy. It says we care about our city and our region and about what happens to it. The issue is whether we look growth in the face, understand it, and take control of it, or whether we allow big problems to overwhelm us. In looking for an example of Seattle strength, I ended up at the curbside, in a neighborhood, where collectively we took on one of the most vexing growth problems facing American cities anywhere.

Last month, our citizens recycled more tonnage of garbage than any American city ever. We looked a huge problem in the eye, fashioned a smart program, got an overwhelming response from our citizens, and now lead the nation in solving one of our toughest environmental problems.

If we continue to go to our strengths, the values I outlined at the beginning of these remarks -- creativity, thoughtfulness, respectful public debate, concern for the natural environment, and respect for human diversity -- we

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can turn the problems of growth and change into more victories at the curbside.

- o We can and will renew our harborfront and preserve our natural and open spaces;
- o We can and will agree on tough issues of regional cooperation and governance so as to make better, smarter decisions on managing growth and meeting human need;
- o We can and will marshall all the willing forces in our City to ensure that Seattle is no place for drugs; and
- o We can and will find better ways to further share with more of our citizens the benefits of a growth economy.

Together, we've worked hard this past year to renew a professional and constructive relationship. We must put to work our partnership with each other, our neighborhoods, and suburban communities, and face squarely the problems and opportunities of growth. We must rely on our basic values and the spirit of our community to leave this City better than when we came to it.

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