



2016 State of the City Of North Tonawanda

Delivered by Mayor Arthur G. Pappas

February 2, 2016

My fellow citizens, members of the Common Council, members of the press and guests, it is an honor and a privilege to stand before you and report on the state of our City. First of all, I would like to thank the residents once again for their confidence by voting me into office during the recent November elections. This past year in office was a very busy, educational, and exciting time as I worked with all of our department heads, employees, and citizens of our great City. And, after being in office for the past year, I am happy to report that the City of North Tonawanda is in good shape.

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Last year in my State of the City address, I spoke about the vibrancy, excitement, and a new pride as we experience a “mini renaissance” in North Tonawanda. This still holds true and continues today! Our City continues to grow economically, culturally, and financially. My goal is to continue moving our City forward.

There have been many accomplishments and projects completed during the last year such as new businesses opening up with the creation of new jobs, expansion of existing businesses, continued improvement of our infrastructure, and working on making this community a better place for our residents and visitors. Because of the growth of our business climate, the City has been more attractive to potential business opportunities, and has grown in the number of inquiries of interest.

During the past year, new businesses have opened up along Webster Street, Mid-City Plaza, Oliver Street and on Niagara Falls Blvd. We are looking forward to the opening of new restaurants on Webster and Sweeney Street this coming year, along with the groundbreaking of Ivy Lea Construction, Inc. on Walck Road.

As we continue to strive for economic growth and encourage entities to invest in our community, we must remember that North Tonawanda must invest in itself. No part of the City can be neglected. Every area must be cared for whether residential or commercial.

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To move forward over the next several years, we will continue to work on our City's infrastructure. During this past year, measures were taken to help alleviate the issues with flooding in various pockets of our City. This work will continue in 2016 as storm water and sewer separation projects take place to reduce the flooding in some of the neighborhoods and eliminate the unnecessary treatment of storm water.

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Roads will continue to be a priority of mine in the City. Last year, over 1 million dollars were used to resurface various streets, and another 1 million dollars will be used in 2016 to address this critical infrastructure. Brad Rowles and the team of employees at the Department of Public Works will work diligently to make more of our roads user friendly once the weather permits. Along with road repair, there will be projects to repair or replace sidewalks throughout parts of the City. This, in certain areas, has become urgent and will be addressed.

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There were many projects initiated and completed this past year. The Erie Canal bike path extension that runs along Sweeney Street from Payne Avenue to Mayor's Park was started last year, and the final touches of this project will be completed this spring. In addition, two of the three kayak dock sites at Botanical Gardens and Service Drive were completed this year. All three dock sites, including the last dock at Gateway Harbor Park will be functional this spring. Both of these enhancements will provide additional quality of life activities for our community and those visiting our great City.

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With a significant donation from the East Hill Foundation and the Niagara County Legislature, a new state-of-the-art outdoor basketball court was added to Payne Park last year. This is a great addition to the area and is well utilized by the residents and leagues during the summer months. Additional work was completed last year at the marina along the Niagara River. New boat docks were added to a portion of the site last year, and we plan on completing the installation of the remaining docks this coming season. Another project completed last year was the installation of four back-up gas generators at dedicated pump stations in the City. These generators will be used during an emergency if there is a loss of power, and they will help alleviate flooding in the City.

The 2.4 million dollar rehabilitation of the Frederick B. Durkee Bridge was also completed last year. This significant infrastructure project will extend the service life of the bridge by at least 30 years. This is the only bridge owned by the City, and is a conduit to Tonawanda Island. This bridge is critical for the businesses today, and the opportunity for the growth in the future. Renovations were also made to the City owned Carnegie Art Center in 2015 with a \$343,000 grant from the New York State Office of Community Renewal. Improvements to the facility included a handicap accessible access to the building, handicap bathroom facilities, and other interior and exterior amenities were addressed. There is still more work to be done at this cultural treasure, however, I am happy to announce that a full slate of activities will be scheduled in 2016 to renew the use of this iconic building.

The City was supportive of the various grants that the Riviera Theater received this past year for their expansion project. Once all of the funding is in place for this endeavor, this project will not only be a catalyst for the theatre and the downtown area, but for the City as a whole. Businesses along the Oliver Street corridor began to take shape last year with a \$200,000 grant from the New York Main Street Program. Eight businesses took advantage of this grant program, which is the same program that spurred the renaissance of Webster Street several years ago. For 2016, we are working closely with business and property owners to apply for additional funds that would continue these efforts in redeveloping this corridor of the City.

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Maintenance of our water/wastewater facilities is critical. Various needed infrastructure repairs were made in 2015 at our water plant including the roof being replaced at our pumping station. Additional repairs have been bonded for and scheduled to be made in 2016 at the Wastewater Treatment Plant including an inlet fine screen for \$400K, bar screens for \$600K, and a sluice gate valve replacement for \$150K. These improvements are needed for efficient and effective operation.

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An important part of any municipality is public safety. In 2016, the City will be receiving a new fire pumper for the department. This will be replacing a pumper that is over 23 years old. Capital funding has been allocated this year in the amount of \$135,000 for Nomex gear that is required for the safety of our firefighters. In addition, the City has applied for a FEMA grant in

the amount of \$240,000 for Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus equipment. Replacing our aged equipment for the safety of our residents and firefighters is very important. For the police department, funding has been allocated in the amount of \$205,000 for police cruisers and auxiliary police cars. It is important that we continue to provide our public safety personnel with the equipment necessary to safeguard our City.

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The City continues to improve upon the quality of life aspects of our community with new projects or events. Various beautification efforts will take place this year on Webster and Oliver Streets, along with Gratwick Riverside Park. A new Children's Memorial Walkway is being planned for Brauer Park. Gratwick Riverside Park will be home to a popular Brews and Wine Festival event in August, and in September, the same park will be host to the Healing Field event sponsored by the Erie-Niagara Sunrise Exchange Club during the weekend of September 10-11th.

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The City of North Tonawanda has been fiscally sound over the past several years, and I will work to that same philosophy of maintaining a fiscally responsible budget. As we move forward, this administration will look for ways to operate City government in cost efficient ways, and will look for new ways to provide needed services. We have negotiated three contracts with our unions this past year, and we are currently in the midst of working on the fourth contract. We want to be fair to our employees who work hard for us; however, we also need to be fair to those who pay the bills –the taxpayers. We are in good financial shape right now, and my goal is to keep expenses in line while minimizing the impact on taxpayers.

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It has been an honor and privilege to serve as your Mayor, and I look forward to continuing moving this City forward. I want to thank the department heads for their cooperation and effort during the past year, along with all our City employees. I would also like to thank the members of the Common Council for their support with making our City stronger. Most importantly, I would like to thank the residents for their support.