

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
“Believing in Burlington”
MAYOR JEANNIE HEFTY
CITY OF BURLINGTON
TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2019

Each year I have always tried to provide a true insight of what has transpired over the past year. This year will be different, as I will also reflect on my own feelings of what I’ve witnessed within past history, to what I see now.

Over the last six months, I have been approached by non-residents of Burlington mentioning that Burlington is becoming a destination point once again. So what does that truly mean and what are the benefits to our City? My first thought is there would be more individuals shopping, eating and attending events year around.

When I was a child, I lived on a family dairy farm 11 miles from Burlington, in the East Troy area. My parents would come to Burlington to shop and eat on a Friday night. Can you imagine seeing police officers directing traffic in the intersections of Burlington?

As time went on, my parents became very active in Burlington. My father became a board member for Burlington Memorial Hospital. My mom worked part time at Henney's Drugstore. She also volunteered in the hospital auxiliary. When my father died, my mother built a home in Burlington.

It is very interesting to see how a destination point can lead to many things, including bringing new employment and new residents to the City.

Businesses throughout our City are believing in Burlington. So what is spurring activity in our City?

New businesses coming to Burlington, especially from the Milwaukee area, such as Planet Fitness, The Jewelry Center, and Carpetland. Big R chose Burlington as their first Wisconsin location to open a store! The Western Racine County offices have opened its doors within the Fox River Plaza. We also have a beautiful new aquatic center that families from all over are able to enjoy, as well as a new location for our Senior Center that continues to thrive and grow.

Starbucks, who doesn't build in every city, is now being built in Burlington, along with two other franchises. With activity like this, many other franchises will now look at Burlington more seriously.

Look at our downtown, and the amount of improvements being made throughout. Businesses like Itzin’s investing to expand their space. The Coffee House is building a balcony on the back of their building as an extension of the Liars Club, with gas light decor to enhance the historic downtown district. Don’t forget their open mic nights in which folks from all over come and enjoy these fun events!

Veteran’s Terrace and Mercantile are luring in different venues in addition to traditional weddings. Two major eyesores leading into our City’s gateway, have been purchased and will be extensively remodeled. Miller Motors presented plans to the Plan Commission for property on Milwaukee Avenue. It will have the same look of their current building. The other property is the old Coaches building. Mr. Bevin Dawson’s plans to revitalize this property will certainly improve this area of our main corridor.

Our Council has talked about further improvements to the gateways of our City.

The signage on Hwy 36 North does not currently reflect our proper City Limits. I have asked that signage be changed and put in proper locations. This will show how many of our businesses have made a commitment to be a part of our City.

There are many more events drawing crowds to our City: The Farmers Market, Light up the Night, the Christmas Parade, Hot Chocolate Fest, Autumn Fest joined with Spooky City, which really brought the rib dinner sales to a new height, Rugan’s Wine and Beer Walks, supported by our downtown businesses, continue to bring new people from all over to have fun while visiting our area merchants.

Chocolate Fest kicks off the summer activities; Maxwell Street Days continues to improve with new ideas; and Tall Tales Festival continues to grow bringing national talent to downtown for 2 days.

During the State Ice Carving Competition, businesses experienced a significant increase in sales. Their sponsorship of this event is greatly appreciated and we look forward to their continued support for the next event scheduled in December 2019.

We must also recognize so many of our long time businesses. Their commitment to our community, lends to the history and the continued success of our City.

As you can see, a lot of our businesses have committed to Burlington, with large investments to be involved in this movement of bringing Burlington back as a destination point. I feel a lot of us are saying, “Great, that’s wonderful!”, but how can I help make a difference to our City? I myself started shopping locally even more, and if I can’t find an item here in Burlington, I go online.

Some of the stores are opening later in the day on Fridays and staying open later on a Friday night. Looking downtown, you will see that many stores are seasonally decorating the outside of their storefronts. So many are giving it all to show that downtown is alive!

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Before FoxConn was even a word on the street, we were already looking at the lack of residential housing and senior living. Currently Stonegate plans to develop at least 30 lots as part of the last phase of their development agreement. Oak Park will be putting an addition on to their current development. Residential and senior living will continue to be pursued on Hwy 83 South

or other locations. A new TIF is being explored for future growth on the south end of the City. Two previous TIFS were closed this past year.

Recently you saw articles of the possible merger of the Burlington Rescue Squad and the City of Burlington Fire Department to address the surmounting calls of 1500 to 1600 per year. This is a sensitive issue, as we as a City, need to be ready when these calls increase even more as we experience future growth and development. We want to have volunteerism as a key component to keep our dedicated members. There are so many moving parts to all involved. We are taking this slowly to assure we are covering all of this to the best of our ability.

I have talked to Chairman Ralph Rice explaining where we are at and when we will be talking to their board, after we get through these sensitive issues. I assured him they will have EMS coverage for the Town of Burlington. I told him I would keep him apprised of anything that he and his board needs to know. Out of respect, I personally hand delivered the recent press release to Burlington Town Hall and to Chairman Rice personally, instead of them reading it in the paper.

I have had previous history with Chairman Rice, as he was Chairman when I was Mayor before. We respected each other then and continue to have ultimate respect for each other.

It was interesting during a recent conversation. Chairman Rice said "You know I think it is sad that so many individuals think the City and Town don't work together. I agreed that we do, and we both make up the Burlington Community. When I mention the Burlington Community I am referring to the City and Town.

Let's take a moment and reflect how we work together. Our emergency services worked together and joined with other departments to build the new training center in the City. Last year both the City and Town contracted together to pave Teut Road. We worked together on the paving of Springbrook Drive. Our City Wastewater Treatment Plant is the collection point for Browns and Bohners Lake sewage. The Town's Highway Department and City DPW work together plowing intersections where we meet. The Town of Burlington sold us a liquor license needed for a City of Burlington business. We collaborate on cemetery maintenance. And our administrators meet periodically.

Clearly we work together. I know if ever we have another disaster the Town will continue to be by our side.

Before I close I want to thank this Council for putting in so many long hours. We have had numerous meetings, sometimes going 4 1/2 hours, trying to address so many issues we are faced with. We may disagree at times, but we are always a team.

To City Administrator Carina Walters for your leadership and working with our staff to bring them to even greater heights than they already were. To all of our employees, thank you for serving our City in so many ways, even when there isn't enough time in a day to do it all.

To all the citizens who serve on all the committees and commissions to make our City even better. Thank you!

There is a saying, “If you don't believe in yourself, you will never succeed”. To all of you that Believe in Burlington, thank you! Your efforts in making a difference to our Community is showing. Many individuals are watching the transformation of our City from the outside looking in. And many will be a part of this great City in the future.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carrie Hefly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail.