

The State of the City

City Manager Eileen Donoghue



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Key Priorities

- Cornerstone: Economic Development
- Pillar: Strong Finances
- Pillar: Public Safety
- Pillar: Partnerships
- Pillar: Education

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Economic Development

- HCID Infrastructure Development – Streets F & G, Signature Bridge nearing completion
- HCID Parking Garage Design and Construction – CM at Risk project, deliver by Nov. 2020
 - Design wrapping up, construction to begin late summer 2019
- Ongoing negotiations for development of HCID
- Received \$8,381,998 in combined grant funding for various DPD programs, including earmarks, CDBG, HOPWA, Sarbanes-LRTA, Green Communities, MassDOT SwampLock, MassCEC, MassDEV Parks, HOME, Supportive Housing COC, Emergency Shelter
- The Canalway Cultural District in Downtown Lowell was designated one of “Great Neighborhoods” in the USA of 2018 by the American Planning Association
- Application and designation of five federal Opportunity Zones, which create additional incentives for investment
- A renewed focus on Ayer’s City Industrial Park for job growth has already yielded interest from the Massachusetts life science community.
- Disbursed \$216,000 in grant funds secured via State earmarks to assist companies moving into Downtown
- Received the United States Conference of Mayors' 2019 Partner America Small Business Friendly Community Award.
- Partnered with LDFC on \$235,000 in loans for 4 downtown businesses in startup or growth phases
- Vacancy rates downtown: 12% ground floor units, 20% for upper floor units. Nine (9) new storefront businesses welcomed into Downtown

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Infrastructure + Energy

- Lord Overpass – Entryway into the HCID
 - MassDOT - \$15 million transformative investment; total estimated \$21 million
 - Multimodal transportation friendly , beautifying the corridor, linking Gallagher terminal and HCID/downtown, improved pedestrian, bicycle, bus, and public safety vehicle traffic
 - Construction set to begin September 2019, to run 36-40 months to completion
- Rte. 38 Widening
 - MassDOT - \$4.5 million Highway Safety Improvement Project – 100% Design reached in December, roadway construction to begin late summer 2019; expected completion summer 2021.
- Rapid Flashing Beacons in neighborhoods to improve pedestrian safety
- \$250,000 earmark for Tanner St. realignment – will open the area for new development
- 156,749 ft. of pavement markings in FY19
- Tiger Bridges – completed rehabilitation of the Merrimack Street over Merrimack Canal Bridge. Rehabilitation of the bridge included removal and reinstallation of the historic bridge railing which was restored to include the original cross bar rosettes.
- VeoRide program – dockless bike-sharing program
 - 8,660 rides – around 200 per day
 - 1,730 miles ridden
 - 3,750 unique riders
- Community Choice Power Supply program – has led to over \$1.1 million in savings
- Utility bill analysis program resulted in \$280,968 in cancelled charges, reallocation of misapplied payments since last fiscal year
- Retro-fit of all streetlights to LEDs completed; estimated \$390,000 annual savings

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Quality of Life

- Plastic Bag Ordinance to reduce waste in the City
- Neighborhood Liaison to give stronger attention to our neighborhoods, including stronger code enforcement related to zoning issues such as illegal rooming houses and nuisance issues such as minimum maintenance and illegal signs
- Neighborhood Impact Walks – collaborative approach to beautifying and strengthening our neighborhoods
- A greater focus on diversity and inclusion in all departments of our City Staff
 - Established internal working group to focus on diversity and inclusion around City Departments
 - Provided a mandatory diversity and cultural awareness training for all department heads
- Appropriated funding for a new bus for the Senior Center to improve access and mobility for our seniors
- Pickle Ball courts are in process of being striped – vendor has been selected, finalizing contract

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Economic Development – Looking Forward

- **Mission Statement:** To promote a vibrant, sustainable economy offering diverse business opportunities and revitalizing neighborhoods.
 - **Goal 1** – Preserve the assets of yesterday, find solutions to the challenges of today, and plan for the City of tomorrow
 - **Goal 2** – Encourage economic development in the City of Lowell by retaining current businesses, seeking out new businesses, and working to make Lowell a place where companies want to locate
 - **Goal 3** – Support community development by investing in Lowell's neighborhoods and physical infrastructure

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Education

- Exceeded Net School Spending by \$7.1 million in latest certified numbers from DESE
- Overall contribution of over \$45 million to the schools in City-funded support, including \$15.7 million in direct cash
- \$150,935,483 in Ch. 70 School aid in FY19; to increase to \$160,069,667 in FY20 for a total expected FY20 budget of \$176,428,868
- \$4.1 million in capital repairs at various Lowell Schools, including roof and emergency HVAC work at LHS
- Mayor's Proclamation in support of naming Lowell a UNESCO Learning City, enhancing and reinforcing partnerships with our educational institutions
- 1,819 Work Orders completed at schools by DPW employees
- COPS Grant for \$471,065 to stop school violence – to fund a student safety coordinator, equipment, and software licensing
- Increased working partnership with Lowell Public Schools administration to become more efficient and effective partners
- Applied for 9 MSBA Accelerated Repair Grants to take advantage of State Grant funding opportunities to improve our school buildings
- New Superintendent Joel Boyd will bring new ideas; looking forward to increasing effectiveness of partnership.

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Lowell High School Project

- City Council took a bold vote to move the project forward and ensure a state of the art LHS facility for decades to come
- Much progress has been made in the last year on the LHS Project
- Since May 2018 the City has accelerated efforts continuing the State of the Art campus design
- Project's Schematic Design and Project Scope and Budget have been approved by City Council and MSBA
- We have moved through MSBA modules 4 (Schematic Design), 5 (Project Scope and Budget), and into 6 (Construction Documents), towards complete sets of Design Drawings
- Moving towards a unique showcase school, creating the model for an urban high school campus
- Total Project Size: 622,777 square feet
 - 234,515 sq. feet new construction, including brand new connected Freshman Academy, Field House, "Heart of the School", quad, bridges and more
 - 388,262 sq. feet renovation, building on the good bones of the existing buildings.
- Total Project Budget: \$343,399,220
 - \$215,992,406 grant approved by MSBA Board
 - \$127,406,814 City of Lowell cost share

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Education – Looking Forward

- **Mission Statement – To provide the opportunity for students to move from kindergarten to a post-graduate degree without ever having to leave the City.**
 - **Goal 1** – Enhance the quality of the Lowell Public School System and the Greater Lowell Regional Technical high School.
 - **Goal 2** – Enhance the services offered by City departments that encourage citizens of Lowell to participate in life-long learning opportunities
 - **Goal 3** – Ensure that the Lowell Public School System provides a quality education by tracking outcomes

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Financial Management

- Awarded GFOA Distinguished Budget award for FY18
- Limited tax increase to 2% in FY19, providing Lowell residents one of lowest average single family tax bills in the Commonwealth (244th lowest out of 335 reported to DOR)
 - This is \$1,730 less than the average Massachusetts tax bill
- Provide support and financial planning to fully fund City's Net School Spending obligation without aid of federal funds consecutively for FY18 and FY19
- Coordinated monthly meetings among finance department heads as well as introduced a monthly meeting between other key finance personnel from various City departments
- Guided the city's key financial departments to implement controls to improve business functions, such as cash management and full monthly reconciliations of cash
- Applied for 9 Accelerated Repair Program Grants; awaiting notification on potential awards
- Continued support of the LHS project, providing support to OPM
- Adopted new OPEB funding policy to ensure future obligations are managed in an effective manner
 - Made initial cash infusion to fund, bringing trust balance to \$9.3 million
- Maintained City's strong reserve position; as of end of FY19, City's stabilization account was at approximately \$11.8 million

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Financial Management – Looking Forward

- **Mission Statement** – To implement operational principals and best practices to minimize the cost of government while maximizing constituent services
 - **Goal 1** – Improve the City’s long-term fiscal outlook through sound fiscal policies
 - **Goal 2** – Enhance the transparency of financial management
 - **Goal 3** – Operate and maintain physical assets to protect public investment and ensure achievement of the assets’ maximum useful life

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Public Safety

- New Downtown LPD Substation, fully staffed with 17 officers and 2 commanding officers, to increase presence in central business district
- Maintained highest staffing levels in decades in both the LPD (250) and LFD (213)
- Received \$917,007 grant for firefighter safety gear, including 152 full sets of turnout gear, 80 SCBAs with thermal imaging, and a new compressor system for tank fills; \$35,000 for emergency management preparedness; and the 2nd of 3 years SAFER grant, which covers 75% of 4 FTE firefighter salaries; FEMA reimbursement grant \$454,421 from March 2018 storm
- Purchased and installed washer/ejectors at every firehouse to clean & ensure safety/longevity of turnout gear following fires
- Recommitted to Community Policing under the leadership of newly appointed Chief Kelly Richardson
- LFD conducted fire safety and instruction for 7,489 children and elderly at various events through the City
- The City saw crime fall in nearly all areas that the LPD tracks, including:
 - 12% decrease in NIBRS offenses
 - 37% decrease in Robbery offenses.
 - 51.2% decrease in Theft from a Motor Vehicle.
 - 60.3% decrease in Motor Vehicle Theft.
 - 14.8% decrease in Destruction/Damage/Vandalism of Property.
 - 36.5% decrease in Burglary/Breaking & Entering Offenses
- LPD received \$2,203,602 in Federal, State and Private grant funds
- Made Narcan available as a life-saving-measure in all line cruisers, the cell block, and main desk
- Purchased new LPD river patrol craft and UTV for focused enforcement in hard-to-reach areas; will launch this summer to increase patrols on the Merrimack River and Riverwalk
- Implemented capital upgrade projects in LPD locker room and various LFD firehouses
- Implemented a consolidated radio upgrade to both LPD and LFD radio consoles
- Participated in re-invigorated Neighborhood Impact Team walks to revitalize our neighborhoods

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Public Safety – Looking Forward

- **Mission Statement – To provide a safe, livable, and family-friendly community**
 - **Goal 1** – Enhance public safety in the City of Lowell's neighborhoods
 - **Goal 2** – Improve the quality of life in the City of Lowell by providing fire protection and prevention, emergency response services, and public education activities. Protect all residents, their property, and the environment from natural and man-made disasters.
 - **Goal 3** – Promote clean, healthy, safe, and sustainable neighborhoods throughout the City of Lowell

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Partnerships

- Close partnerships are an important feature of a thriving community – we hold our partnerships with state agencies, the business community, our non-profit organizations, UMass Lowell, MCC, our elected delegation
- Mayors Opioid Epidemic Task Force, a collaborative effort that brings all stakeholders together to continue fighting the opioid epidemic
- The City Manager's Task Force on Homelessness and Housing Sustainability, a large group of many community partners working together on this common problem towards a unified goal of housing the chronically homeless
- DPD works closely with the UMass Lowell Innovation Hub (iHub) and the LDFC on helping growing startups find permanent office space in Lowell. Four (4) companies have recently moved from the iHub to other locations in Lowell. They include StitchDX (digital marketing), Horsepower Technologies (high-tech), invisaWear (wearable tech), and CAIDE Systems (artificial intelligence software).
- Council Motions have led to successful partnerships, including a group effort between many City departments, Mass DEP, MassDOT, and the Middlesex Sheriff's office cleaning up with 1st St. Corridor, increase patrols, increase monitoring/enforcement, and new anti-dumping measures
- CO-OP team continues to battle the opioid epidemic in innovative ways including a dedicated firefighter, who has saved lives with narcan and rescue breathing on overdose victims.
- Comprehensive Municipal Facilities study by EMG to baseline an inventory of all municipal facilities and their present day conditions, and expected useful life of all equipment contained within
- Expanded the City Manager's connection with neighborhoods via the Neighborhood Liaison position
- Preparing for the future by engaging SiFi networks to build out a fiber optic network within the City
- Increased effectiveness of partnership with the Lowell Public Schools Administration

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Partnerships – Looking Forward

- **Mission Statement – Develop collaborations with local universities, colleges and non-profit organizations that are vital to driving economic growth, building vibrant communities, preparing students for the future and enhancing the quality of life for Lowell residents.**
 - **Goal 1** – Educate local youth and international students to create a talented workforce
 - **Goal 2** – Coordinate efforts to better leverage resources to effectively solve problems
 - **Goal 3** – Foster innovation and research that can improve economic, environmental, and social impacts