



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

February 25, 2009

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MAYOR DELIVERS 2009 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Barrett calls for optimism, continued economic development

Mayor Tom Barrett praised the city's past achievements and outlined his plan to increase green jobs, economic development and workforce training in the coming year in his State of the City address this morning.

Speaking at the state-of-the-art Harley-Davidson Museum, Barrett called on the citizens of Milwaukee to remain optimistic during the international economic downturn. He pointed to the Harley-Davidson Museum, the Menomonee Valley and the Brewery project as examples of growth and job creation in the city.

"I am fully confident that Milwaukee will withstand the current economic downturn," Barrett said. "We will make smart investments, continue to build strong partnerships, provide training to our workforce and improve our public schools. We will emerge as a stronger and more competitive city."

Barrett said one way to keep Milwaukee strong is through the creation of green industries and jobs. Milwaukee is already at the forefront of freshwater technology, and Barrett called on the city to strengthen its position by creating a School of Freshwater Sciences spearheaded by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Milwaukee 7's Water Council.

After meeting with President Obama last week, Barrett said the stimulus package is the perfect opportunity to invest in the city's infrastructure and workforce. He called for improving local roads, investing in high-speed commuter rail, repairing the KK River channel and leveraging federal funds for the Milwaukee Police Department.

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Barrett especially stressed the importance of public safety. He applauded the police department for its successful efforts to reduce crime in the city, and urged police officers, the clergy, community agencies and individuals to continue their collaborative effort to reduce crime in the future.

Barrett acknowledged shortcomings with Milwaukee Public Schools and the city's high foreclosure rate, but said he and other state and local leaders were already working on plans to improve both situations.

Barrett supports Governor Doyle's proposed state budget, which includes a revision to the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program that would save Milwaukee taxpayers \$10 million in property taxes next year alone and increase the amount of money that flows into Milwaukee Public Schools' classrooms.

On the foreclosure front, Barrett announced a \$100,000 contribution to the City's Court Appointed Mediation program that will bring lenders and borrowers to the table.

Milwaukee has received \$9.2 million in federal funding to address the problem. This money will help homebuyers, responsible landlords and developers put foreclosed homes into use. Barrett said Milwaukee will also soon launch a Homeownership Consortium that will enhance homebuyer education and financial literacy efforts.

Barrett closed his speech by recognizing the economic challenges ahead, but also by acknowledging the ability of Milwaukeeans to preserve in difficult times.

"I am confident that Milwaukee will weather this economic storm," Barrett said. "I believe in the strength of our community and that the progress we've made will continue through successful partnerships with businesses, government and community organizations. We do not stand alone; we stand and rise together."