

State of the City Address
Mayor Jim Brainard
October 13, 2010
“Building a Thriving City”

THANKS

Mr. Chairman, Madame President, members of the board of directors, staff and distinguished guests, thank you for inviting me back to report on the State of our City.

First, let me report that the state of Carmel Indiana ----is excellent.

- You live in one of Indiana’s safest cities,
- You benefit from the city’s commitment to quality schools,
- You work in a city growing in the industries that will make the biggest differences in the years ahead, medicine, technology, services, and management.
- You have benefited from the strong fiscal management that has kept your taxes low,

You and I are here because we share a common interest in what goes on in our city. From the workings of our local government, our schools, our community organizations and institutions, we all know that there is a vital connection between how well we work together and the end result of our efforts.

So, you might say that the state of the city of Carmel is Thriving.

But, to assume that the description of “thriving” occurred by accident, would be incorrect.

Cities that failed to heed the warnings of a slowed economy are experiencing extremely difficult challenges as the economy slowly recovers from the recession.

Fortunately, Carmel is poised to lead from a position of strength in the recovery,

- We will add jobs and companies at lower cost since we invested in infrastructure at a time when costs were lower,
- We can pay for our continued improvements from existing revenues and savings,
- We benefit from excellent city utilities, delivered at a cost lower than that of surrounding communities,
- We have built our city with a view to the future, providing amenities that will attract the very brightest and best of companies and employees, drawn to our visionary commitment to parks, trails, arts and culture.

We have been careful and conservative stewards of our finances.

1. We have operated from a fiscal plan, something that many cities today do not undertake. As a result, you have the confidence to know that the decisions made in my administration are based on sound assumptions and projections. No debt is undertaken without a confirmation that it is soundly based on the ability to pay.
2. When we can save money, we do so, even if the appearance can sometimes be confusing. For example, on the Keystone Parkway Project, we closed the road two times for 45 days. While it might have seemed like a bad idea to close such a major thoroughfare, as a result, the contractor was able to finish the road faster with the road close, which saved the City about \$1 million.
3. We have been careful stewards of our finances. As an example, in April of this year, in the midst of the worst depression since 1929, the City of Carmel's financial rating was actually raised by Standard and Poor's, a national objective rating company. This outside firm looked at our total debt and decided that it was appropriate for a city our size.
4. Because we are aggressive fiscal managers, we have been able to deliver on our promises to keep taxes under control. In fact, the homeowners are paying less today than in 1995.

As a result of this continuing commitment to fiscal management, the City Council has a budget before them for next year that meets all our commitments to our newly annexed areas, maintains a strong and reasonable economic development approach and keeps a commitment to the taxpayers that we will not raise residential property taxes.... AND LEAVES well over \$20 million in unspent funds at the end of 2011.

It is my job as mayor to present a budget that allows our city to compete and provide excellence services in a fiscally sound manner. We have done that year after year as evidenced by the fact that, even before inflation, our residential taxes are less than they were in the mid '90's.

I don't want to overlook one other component that you get for your tax dollar... Carmel city employees. If you know any of them at all, you know that they are hard-working and dedicated. They are innovative, pay attention to detail, look for ways to improve and put the customer, which is you - the taxpayer - first.

You met many of them as you came in at the booths in the back, but I would like to take a moment to have them stand and be recognized. Please join me in thanking them for their dedication to our City.

ONLY ONE CHANCE TO BUILD OUR CITY THE RIGHT WAY

I want to talk with you now about how we are building a thriving community... why we are building it the way we are ... how we are building it and how we know we are doing it right.

First, let me emphasize that we only have one chance to do this right. This once in a lifetime opportunity comes with the responsibility of building a city that future generations will inherit. Unlike cities where city leaders spend time correcting the errors of the past, we are fortunate in starting with essentially a blank canvas, leveraging the areas with existing infrastructure, -- building our downtown in City Center, developing the Arts & Design District and filling in the Meridian Street Corridor.

Keystone Parkway is another example of a once in a lifetime design opportunity. Getting that right benefits our City well into the future. Doing it wrong would have immediate detrimental effect on Carmel. I am so please with the results of that project and I know you are too because many of you have emailed me or stopped me on the street to tell me how much you love the project.

BUILDING ON THE TRADITIONS OF THE PAST

I mentioned earlier that Carmel's becoming a thriving city didn't happen by accident. It was the foresight of our former city leaders that set the tone and our commitment and dedication to continuing to create a high quality of life in Carmel that has allowed the city to thrive.

Former city leaders stood strong in their belief that the Meridian Street Overlay Zone, allowing only high quality office buildings to locate along the corridor, was the right thing to do, even when they received much criticism. That is an example of city planning done right for the right reasons.

After the initial building was constructed at 116th and Meridian, it was several years before other buildings followed. That was also a time when the economy had struggled, but city officials didn't back down, but continued to follow their plan.

There is no doubt that Carmel would look much different today had they not stood strong in their convictions. That corporate corridor has become the most sought after real estate in Indiana and is home to the second largest concentration of office workers in the state.

These officials also stood strong in their desire to build their city building complex in the elegant and stately Georgian Colonial Style, even when there were no other similar structures nearby and Civic Square stood alone.

That helped set the tone and style for future development in the area.

Those well thought out choices allowed us to move forward, guided by their initial decisions. It is our responsibility to honor that philosophy of very high quality development.

WHAT IS OUR STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

Our strategy has been, and will continue to be, building a vibrant and thriving city that has broad appeal based on the wisest use of tax dollars with the greatest **long-term** economic impact. We will continue to have a strong focus on quality planning. Our focus is NOT on the next election cycle, but the best long-term decisions for our city.

We have often laid out our vision for the community, but it is important to recognize that we have a long-term strategy to achieve that vision

We believe, and it has been proven time and time again, that the investments we are making today will continue to pay off now and into the future in the form of economic development. We need to stand strong in our beliefs, like our city leaders before us, so that the Carmel will thrive.

One of the reasons that Carmel thrives is because we focus attention on attracting business to Carmel. Twenty-nine percent of our assessed value comes from our commercial properties. That is high in comparison to other cities.

Carmel recognizes the value and benefits to the community of business development. It creates jobs, attracts other business activity and helps keep our homeowner property taxes not only one of the lowest in the state but one of the lowest when compared to other cities across the nation.

When you understand why Carmel has seen success in its economic development efforts, you can understand why it is to our benefit to cultivate a climate to attract and retain a variety of commercial ventures.

HOW DO WE KNOW THE STRATEGY IS WORKING

How do we know that our strategy is working? There are many indicators that tell us our strategy is working. Some of those indicators are from outside sources.

OUTSIDE EVALUATION INDICATORS

Our “Outside evaluation indicators” include the independent assessments made by others –

- **Award recognition** is one of the outside indicators that tells us we are succeeding
 - For example, our Bio-solids program at the Carmel Utilities Waste Water Treatment Plant received national recognition when it received a City Livability Award from the US Conference of Mayors.
 - The City was recognized as one of *Money* magazine’s “Best Places to Live,” placing 14th in the nation
 - Keystone Parkway has received numerous industry awards for quality design, quality construction, innovation and for the project’s communication efforts.
- **Being featured on the national level, in a positive light**, is also an indicator that Carmel is finding success.
 - In the last two weeks alone, Carmel was featured in *Newsweek*, the *Financial Times* of London and the *LA Times*

- Michael Feinstein's special chronicling his work with the Great American Songbook began airing on PBS last week. The second episode in the series airs tonight on WFYI, Channel 20 at 8 p.m.
- Bub's Burgers was featured on the *Man vs. Food* cable show and its companion internet coverage
- Those are just a few recent examples of the wide spread coverage Carmel is receiving. When we are featured in the national spotlight, it helps attract businesses and families who share our ideals.
- Another indicator that we are doing things right, it the fact that **others want to learn from our experience.**
 - I have been invited to speak across the U.S. including:
 - Florida,
 - North Carolina
 - Wisconsin
 - Illinois and
 - The Greater Cincinnati area
- In addition to being invited to speak elsewhere, **many city and towns travel to Carmel to see for themselves** the results of our careful city planning efforts or to experience our many roundabouts. For example...
 - Kansas City recently sent 50 city leaders and elected officials
 - Rochester Hills, Michigan came this past spring
 - Cary, North Carolina has sent city planners, city leaders and officials more than once
 - Davenport, Iowa visited Carmel to study roundabouts. A friend in Iowa on business was surprised to see me in Carmel's roundabout video being aired on the local government channel there.
 - Orland Park, Illinois came to see City Center, the Village of West Clay, the Arts & Design District and our roundabouts as well.
 - We were also included in the tours offered as part of the American Planning Association conference that was held in Hamilton County this summer.
- In addition, our **police department is independently accredited.** – this vigorous and detailed evaluation process is completed by a third-party, national agency. This indicates a level of success that is only achieved by the best in the field.
- **Financial indicators of our success** continue to be our low taxes and excellent bond ratings as I mentioned earlier.

OTHER INDICATORS THAT OUR STRATEGY IS WORKING.

PUBLIC PRIVATE INVESTMENTS AND ATTRACTING PRIVATE INVESTMENT

- Civic Theater
 - Invested long term in the Tarkington Theater in The Performing Arts Center
- Early investors in City Center
 - Shapiros

- Schwinn, now Salon 01
- AMLI, now NTS City Center Apartments
- Ryland Townhomes at City Center
- Our public private partners in Arts & Design District
 - The mixed use building currently owned by Barrett and Stokley and occupied by Muldoons, Joe's Butcher Shop and Bazbeau Pizza as well as many other quality shops.
 - The Lurie Building
 - Old Town Shops One and Two developed by Pedcor. Those retail condominiums are now housing a variety of arts related businesses.
 - And currently under construction is the Keystone Construction project, not to be confused with the road project, which will also be a mixed use building with two levels of parking underneath, retail on the street level and residential options above.

It will be exciting to see the area continue to grow and develop during the coming years.

AMONG THESE INDICATORS OF SUCCESS, ONE OF THE INDICATORS THAT MEANS THE MOST TO ME IS – HOW PEOPLE INVEST THEIR OWN MONEY.

- To me, one of the best indicators of our success is the **investment people make with their hard earned money**... I know that people do not take decisions lightly when it comes to investing their own money ... especially in this economy.
- We just need to look at the high quality growth in Carmel; the **businesses, individuals and families that are moving to the area** are testament to the fact that we are attracting the right kind of growth.
- This growth includes the most recent relocation announcement by the law firm of Drewry, Simmons and Vornehm, LLC.
 - **Mike Drewry and David Temple are with us today from that firm**
 - They are the first commercial tenant in City Center.
 - When I spoke to Mike about why they moved their firm to City Center he told me this. And I quote –
 - *“Drewry Simmons Vornehm is very pleased to be a part of the innovative Carmel City Center development. Being a part of such a large scale development touches on the heart of our focus and business, as well as the walkable urban aspect of the entire development that will place our employees and clients at the heart of Carmel's government facilities, retail and restaurant establishments, greenspace, residential developments, offices, and world class performing arts centers, not to mention access to the Monon Greenway of Carmel.”*
- Earlier this summer, Toshiba Business Solutions relocated their offices to the Meridian Street Corridor. We have a representative from Toshiba with us today as well.

- **Jim McMeel – Toshiba Business Solutions**
 - Jim shared with me part of what went into the decision to move to Carmel. Jim said that, and again I am quoting Jim here...
 - *“In terms of why we chose to relocate our office to Carmel, there were several factors that played in this decision. First, from a logistics standpoint, it provided easy access to the various highways/interstates that we use on a daily basis as we cover approximately two thirds of the State of Indiana. Second, the amenities that are available to our employees, such as Clay Terrace, the Carmel Arts District, and the Monon just to name a few.”*
- Another recent addition to the Carmel community is
 - **Jay Slifer of Jay Slifer Design**
 - Jay relocated both his family and his design firm this summer to Carmel. He now lives and works in the Carmel Arts & Design District.
 - Jay had many thoughts about his decision to move to Carmel. He said:
 - *“The Carmel Arts and Design District, and more specifically the Indiana Design Center, is like nothing I've seen in a city of this size. It's as if you took a city block from Wicker Park, in Chicago or Soho, (New York) and dropped it into an idyllic rural setting. Carmel was a natural choice for my family, when I looked to relocate my business from downtown Chicago. No longer did I have to sacrifice my family time, or quality of life for my career and my business. Carmel, in a word, has created a wonderful balance, and balance is something that I believe we're all looking for more of these days.”*
- Also relocating in the Indiana Design Center is renowned designer
 - **Walter Knabe of Walter Knabe Design**
 - Of the reasons for the move, Walter said:
 - *“Relocating my studios to the Indiana Design Center in the Carmel Arts and Design District is already proving to be a brilliant move. We are seeing increased traffic and revenues, not to mention the synergies that are being created. I'm thrilled to be a part of the District”.*
- We have another designer with us today that sees the prestige of being located among the other leaders in their field at the Indiana Design Center.
 - **Eric Reynolds from Outre’ (utr) Design**
 - When asked about his decision to move his company to Carmel, Eric said:
 - *“Outré is a family owned business that sells products made right here in Indiana and we felt like Carmel would be a home to grow our family line of furniture. Carmel puts a lot of emphasis on the community and provides its residents with a great place to start a family, so we thought our family could continue to grow here too.”*

- There are also companies that want to create an environment in which their workers can thrive. Already based in Carmel and recognized as an outstanding workplace, SEP wanted to be even more engaged in the City Center area. Earlier this year, SEP announced that they would relocate their offices to the theater building at City Center. They are scheduled to move in at the end of this year. With us from SEP today is
 - **Traci Dossett, SEP – VP of Operations**
 - Representing SEP, Traci said
 - ***“As the 2010 Best Place to Work in Indiana, it’s obvious that SEP cares about its employees and providing them with a great place to work. This is one of the reasons that we chose City Center as our new home. The combination of our building’s outside terraces and the close location to the many shops and restaurants, Monon Trail and the vibrancy of the Performing Arts Center will help not only attract new talent to our company but will provide our employees with a great facility where they can enjoy coming to work.”***
- Another component of City Center and our development of Carmel’s core is the variety of housing options we are creating. Attracted to both the vibrancy of the development and the easy lifestyle offered at City Center, we have with us today one of the first tenants at the Residences at City Center.
 - **Seth Beard**
 - When deciding to move to the Residences at City Center, Seth said that he was drawn to the mixed use development. He said
 - ***“As a young adult, I look forward to realizing the positive impact of projects such as the Carmel City Center. The future of the city is looking bright.”***
- I want to thank Mike, David, Jim, Jay, Traci, Walter, Eric and Seth for sharing Carmel’s enthusiasm for building a thriving city and for getting engaged in our community.
- Clearly, we are attracting investment as a result of our strategy... the Meridian Street Corridor continues to attract corporate and division headquarters and the developing Arts & Design District and City Center are drawing in companies that are excited to be in the heart of Carmel where there is a vibrant energy emerging.

WHY IS OUR STRATEGY OF INVESTING IN OUR CENTRAL CORE A GOOD USE OF TAXPAYER MONEY?

- **It is a good strategy because ... we are thriving**
 - **outside indicators, such as independent evaluations, award recognition, inclusion in national media, improved bond ratings and emulation by other cities show us we are on the right track**

- **It is a good strategy because... we are achieving a return on our investment**
 - **Public private investment and purely private investment has been attracted to the area because of our city planning efforts**
- **It is a good strategy because... we continue to attract businesses and families**
 - **Families and businesses choose to locate or relocate to Carmel and become engaged in the community.**
- **It is a good strategy because... it is good for the region**
 - Our success is not just good for Carmel, it is good for the region. As they say, “A rising tide raises all boats.” Hamilton County as well as Indianapolis and the surrounding area will realize benefits from the Arts & Design District and The Performing Arts Center being adjacent to or nearby their communities. As I said before, even Kokomo is hoping to attract economic development to their city because the Palladium is within their region.

We have a strategy and it is working.

We need to have faith and stand strong together while the United States weathers these tough economic times. We have been able to continue attracting business even during the downturn in the economy; imagine how well we will be positioned and how bright our future will be as things continue to improve.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP US THRIVE? – STAY CONNECTED

You can help us thrive by continuing to be engaged in the community.

We are creating a built environment that will continue to attract individuals and businesses.

However, it is the feeling of being connected to one’s community that keeps people here... the friendships and strong business relationships that help us feel a *real* part of the community.

Continue to be active in business organizations such as the Chamber, service organizations, civic boards or commissions. Volunteer at your place of worship, help those in need, get involved in your children’s school or their activities.

Each week, I meet families, that have decided to make Carmel their home. They are moving to Carmel for a better life for their families and they are committed to sharing in our community. Our parks, our schools, our arts are all part making Carmel a thriving community.

A city should be a place where every person feels safe on its streets and in the homes of their friends.

It should be a place that kindles and inspires our greatest aspirations.

It should be a place that other cities emulate.

It should be a place with buildings that stir our imagination.

It should be a place with parks that honor and preserve the area's natural beauty.

It should be a place that inspires our youth to a lifetime of service and leadership.

It should be a place of elevated discourse and discussion.

Most of all, it should be a place where each person is accepted and made to feel a part of the community.

This is what cities have always strived for and what we still want today.

We are working to create just such a city.

Carmel is a thriving place, of which we are all a part and it is a gift we will leave with future generations.

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