

Making Our Houses A Many Splendored, Unified Home

The 2013 State of the City Address

C. Kim Bracey, Mayor, City of York

York College of Pennsylvania

York, Pennsylvania

Congressman Perry, State Representatives, County Commissioners Chronister, Hoke, and Reilly, City Council members, York College President George Waldner, incoming President Pamela Gunter-Smith, city directors, city front-line staff, members of City boards and authorities, friends, and guests, I am honored to join you in York's cathedral of learning, York College of Pennsylvania.

I particularly am honored to join you in the newly christened "Waldner Performing Arts Center."

I want to thank the members of my cabinet, Business Administrator Michael O'Rourke; Public Works Director Jim Gross; Economic and Community Development Director Kevin Schreiber; Police Chief Wes Kahley; and Deputy Fire Chief Halpin who is here in the absence of David Michaels.

Gentlemen, I know that, at times, I can be demanding.

I also know that, **all** the time, I expect commitment and results, and you guys deliver.

I may not say it enough: you have served **all** of our people with distinction and flying colors.

Thank you for your steady, stable leadership.

I want to thank **all** of our City workers who have persevered through challenging times to serve our people with devotion and care.

Friends, since I last addressed you, we lost five giants in the great story of our York: former Mayor Betty Marshall; former City Councilwoman Joanne Borders; civil rights leader Dorrie Leader; visionary, philanthropist and entrepreneur, Arthur Glatfelter, Jr.; ardent city supporter and Noreen Freeland, a city resident, a neighborhood leader, and gun control advocate.

Tonight, we reserve five empty seats in the front row to honor them and all Yorkers whom we lost over the last year.

The future looks bright because of your living legacies.

Thank you, and, please God, bless them in eternity.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to address you here at one of the great emerging colleges of the northeast and one of the nation's best kept secrets, York College of Pennsylvania, whose origins trace to 1776 on North Beaver Street in the heart of our City.

Just as York College relentlessly has pursued the objectives of its strategic plans, updated every five years! – **right, Dr. Waldner?!**, your City government, with a host of partners, has stayed true to its Strategic Plan while achieving our administration's main goals.

As promised, we launched our ***Fiscal Freedom and Stability Campaign*** to educate stakeholders and the public about the peculiar problems imposed by the state that stress third class cities like York.

I deeply share our people's concern about stabilizing property taxes and creating a fairer tax environment that is fertile for homeownership, stability, reinvestment, and growth.

As part of *Fiscal Freedom's* “**inside game,**” doing all we can with the resources that we have, we made changes in all city departments that have resulted in real savings of **over \$600,000 per year.**

Tightening belts can be difficult, but, mainly by attrition, we reduced the number of city employees by 32 – a workforce reduction of nearly ten percent. We have increased efficiencies and will continue to do more with less.

We held the line on municipal property taxes for 2013.

Paid for by the state and drafted in 2006 and then in 2011 by experts from Public Financial Management, we created five year financial plans for the first time in our city's recent history, and, under my watch, we will continue to do so.

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Led by City Council Vice President Henry Nixon and Mantec CEO John Lloyd, our emboldened ***Fair Share Initiative Task Force*** asked tax exempt property owners to pay 25% of what their municipal taxes would be. Each owner of tax exempt property receives my annual solicitation letter seeking fair share contributions. This year, The letter I authored was signed by All five Current City Council members, past city council presidents, Mary Anne Bacas, and Genevieve Ray, joined by civic stakeholders, Louis Appell, Tony Campisi, Bob Pullo, Tim Warfield, Tom Wolf, Joe Wagman and Jenny Zimmerman for also signing on to this campaign and signing our fair share letter. I thank them all , soliciting contributions as part of our committee to solicit contributions.

Friends, for 2012, ***Fair Share*** collected **\$460,288.08 with \$320,000** coming from WellSpan York Hospital.

This is the highest annual ***Payment In Lieu of Taxes*** amount ever collected in our city's history, and that's cause for applause!

Our 2013 goal is \$1 million.

We also doubled down on efforts to recoup unpaid sewer and refuse fees, bringing in more than **\$1.7 million** in new revenue based on payment plans. I agree that the decision to shut off water and collect delinquent accounts was long overdue, and that is why I proceeded after only one year in office.

Collectively, these efforts have led to savings and new revenue in excess of **\$2.5 million dollars**. That is equivalent to almost 3 mills of taxes!

A strong hub makes for healthy spokes, and, as Metro York, we all are in this together. Just as no man or woman is an island, no York County municipality is an island.

To buck Pennsylvania's fragmented, frozen-in-time, horse-and-buggy system of government, under my watch, our City builds upon smartly sharing services, such as providing professional fire services to North York Borough.

With respect, goodwill, and a calculator at the ready, we will build on existing relationships for real results and savings.

As part of *Fiscal Freedom's* "**outside game**," working with a host of cities and Chambers of Commerce, we have urged our General Assembly to reform outdated and costly pension and binding arbitration laws.

Finally, we urge our state Legislature to pass meaningful property tax reform and local option legislation that allows our core communities to right their financial ships and chart bright futures.

As I committed to the Springdale Neighborhood Association, tonight I extend an invitation to our County elected delegation to attend an upcoming meeting with our residents to discuss property tax concerns and reform. Despite the best efforts of the over 50 third class cities throughout Pennsylvania, game-changing tax reform can only come from Harrisburg.

Folks, I will never tire of advocating for our people, but our state leaders, might be getting a little tired of hearing from me!

We need them to hear straight from you.

Job One Initiative

True to our ***Job One*** customer service initiative, our front-line and staff employees have undergone intensive training with Professional Edge to deliver responsive, courteous, and convenient service to our customers.

We have instituted a 24 hour response time policy for phone calls.

The importance of quality customer service has been incorporated in our applicant interviews and new hire orientations.

We streamlined our review, permitting, and inspection process.

We adopted a "no-change-of-use, no-certificate-of-occupancy-needed" process to lessen the burden and cost of start-ups, which makes it easier for small businesses to open and get going in our City.

We implemented ***Residential Walk Out*** permits to make it easy for rehabbers to quickly get their residential work permit so they can get major house work done over a weekend. Let me reiterate. A resident can walk in on a Friday, apply for a permit, and then leave with that permit. Folks, this is a first-of-its-kind in our City.

Convenient parking is part of good customer service. As promised, we introduced a smart meter pilot program, at no cost, near Central Market. The program has been a success, and downtown soon will sport more smart meters.

Finally, we kept the U.S. post office downtown – and closer to Continental Square – by supporting its move to a remodeled building on West Market. That move complements our strategic plan to rejuvenate that key block..

Getting Our Physical Houses In Order

Since day one of our administration, we have worked hard to get the city's many “**houses**” in order with class and dignity for better customer service for the 21st century.

That is the heart of government.

Customer-service friendly, with 155 parking spaces and ***without a net cost*** to city taxpayers, your new City Hall on South George is open for business. The move was the smart and right thing to do, as it permanently eliminates a costly annual rent payment of \$150,000.

The verdict is in. Our people deserve their new City Hall, and our people like their new City Hall.

In 2013, thanks to a \$5 million state grant and a \$600,000 donation from **WellSpan**, we will convert the former City Hall into a modern, customer-service friendly police headquarters worthy of accreditation.

Both major upgrades, which will well serve our citizens for generations to come, have been done at ***no cost*** to city taxpayers.

We also secured over \$4 million in grants to make big improvements to our cherished Central Market and Farmers Market and to construct the Marketview Arts Center.

Those who remember the glory of Central Market in the 1950s have raved about the market's new lighting, site lines, and overall appearance. Today, Central Market has **54 vendors**, more than at any time in recent memory. Central Market recently hosted its first wedding and will be hosting more unique events!

Happy birthday, Central Market -- 125 years and counting!

Last year, we announced that improving traffic flow and convenience on Market Street, from city-line to city-line, would be a priority. We follow through for you.

A PennDOT grant for **nearly \$180,000** will be used for comprehensive signal improvements along our two major corridors, Market Street and George Street. By 2014, we will synchronize these lights on our major arteries to improve mobility and convenience.

Another priority is to mill and pave Market Street, from city line to city line, by 2015.

Tonight, I am happy to report that the York Area Metropolitan Planning Organization has approved funding, through PennDOT, for **\$2.8 million**, for the milling and paving of Market Street in its plan.

Salem Square Transformation

Our neighborhoods give rise to the next generation of our city leaders. As such, we continue to work block by block to improve and strengthen our historic neighborhoods.

Friends, a holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization works. This approach includes neighborhood policing, blight remediation, physical design, and better lighting.

Through grants and leveraged resources, in Salem Square we have invested more than \$5 million in new streetlights, sidewalks, blight removal, and 16 new owner occupied homes.

Salem Square's new \$75,000 façade-improvement program is now under way. We partner with the Salem Square Neighborhood Association and Habitat for Humanity to repair mailboxes, paint siding, fix rainspouts and make other upgrades.

To keep crime out of alleys and passageways between homes, the collaborative "**Gates Project**" installed **290** locking, wrought-iron gates in front of breezeways in Salem Square and other sensitive neighborhoods. These gates add dignity and charm while blocking the bad guys from plying their trade.

In the Salem Square Neighborhood, crime is down by 22% since last year.

As part of our ***Zero Tolerance for Blight Campaign***, we strategically acquire blighted, vacant, or nuisance structures to transition them into assets.

We condemned a fire damaged home on Kings Mill Road and sold it to be renovated. The long time abandoned 515 Linden Avenue will now be de-converted into a single family home to complement the Lady Linden Bed & Breakfast at 505. And what was once five blighted abandoned properties are now four new Habitat for Humanity homes.

Homeowners and homes, paying taxes and achieving the American dream, where there once was blight and abandonment. Folks, it's nitty, gritty work, but it is working.

Our campaign includes acquiring two watering holes that saw their share of problems -- a former social club on East Princess Street and the former Gus' Tavern at 594-596 West Princess.

Tonight, I am proud to announce that we are working with the State to finalize a \$250,000 state grant for the adaptive reuse of Gus' Bar into a financially sustainable neighborhood resource and community center. There, officers of our West End Neighborhood Policing Unit will hang their hats and engage neighbors.

Nearby, the York Housing Authority's Homes at Thackston Park project features 39 new rentals and four new owner-occupied homes and will lead to the demolition of the Codorus Homes, to be replaced with a new waterfront greenway.

Our ***Lean, Green, and Serene York Campaign***, an umbrella of public-private partnerships encouraging a healthier, cleaner, and greener York, is making great strides.

To cultivating eight **Urban Farms** – an historic high!; to upgrading both of our historic farmers' markets; to C-Town Supermarket, a new full-service grocery store; to an upgraded grocery at the new \$7.5 million George Street Commons; to making York more bike and foot-friendly; to seeding small business ventures through our Fresh Foods Fund; to the new Kattalasso Family Health Center in Salem Square, to the new health center along East Princess through Emmanuel Church together, our York is becoming greener, leaner, and cleaner.

Our City youth will be cultivating and learning in their new **Hope Street Urban Farm & Learning Lab**. The seed of a one acre RDA owned parcel is now a blossoming partnership of Lincoln, New Hope, Logos, and William Penn.

Speaking of access to foods, your downtown is becoming a restaurant, specialty foods, craft beer, micro-brew, and fine wine epicenter for foodies and fun. Downtown now features, to name just a few newcomers, Mudhook Brewpub, Liquid Hero Brewing

Company, Holy Hound Taproom, and soon-to-come wine bars, Vintage and The Handsome Cab.

Downtown York now has over **100** restaurants, cafes, market vendors, and food retailers – more than at any time in its recent history.

That's cause for applause!

These businesses do not just show up at the click of our fingers. They arise from enterprising entrepreneurs, strong investor confidence in our City, and persistent assistance from city staff.

A Live and Loud Future

Last year, we promised a “Live” and “Loud” future in York. Musicians of the band, Live, and native sons of our city, Chad Taylor, Chad Gracey and Patrick Dahlheimer, and their partner, Bill Hynes, are delivering.

Think Loud Development is making 210 York Street the state-of-the-art headquarters of United Fiber and Data, adding over 70 new jobs. The \$45 million project features a rehearsal and recording studio, apartment suites, and memorabilia storage.

Recently a Grammy Award-winning hip hop violinist toured the building, and his quote was, “I cannot wait to record in York.”

In York, we've always had a strong manufacturing tradition. Now, we will manufacture creativity and the arts as well.

All told, the numbers tell the story.

Over **\$75 million** in development was invested in our city in 2012 alone.

In 2012, we experienced an extraordinary **273,000** square feet of new commercial and residential development.

For the first time in a half century, our York City is growing. From 2000-2011, our York grew by **7.3%**, **from 40,862 to 43,857**. Growth has continued with more residential projects for a broad range of incomes in 2012 and beyond.

Employees commuting into our city nearly double our population to about **80,000** on most days.

In 2012, **280,085 folks**– a 5% increase in per-game attendance over 2011 -- attended York Revolution games at Sovereign Bank Stadium. Better than advertised, the Revolution has averaged **274,981** attendees during six great seasons!

Over **100,000** attended our city's parades and special events, over **80,000** people attend performances, events, and receptions at the Strand Capitol Performing Arts, over **48,000** attended the York County Heritage Trust Museum and the trust's other venues, and Dreamwrights Youth and Family Theater welcomed **8,840**.

Friends, this is objective evidence of a thriving *physical* city and the many “**houses**” of our city that, today, stand united and strong.

But we can do better. We can connect our many “**houses**” to create a many splendored, unified **home**.

Making Our Houses a Many Splendored, Unified Home

Jesus said, “There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?”

And so it is with our York. We have many houses that are strong and ready for the future.

We also have many dwelling places that are prepared for you in a special, many splendored, and unified home. Yes, we have special places prepared just for you, so you can make a difference and be part of something special that is bigger than yourself.

From city-line to city-line, from neighborhood to neighborhood, we are not just getting our physical houses in order, unifying them, and connecting the dots.

Together, we are connecting our physical assets to our people, our lifeblood institutions like York College, and our **very soul** as citizens, as neighbors and neighborhoods, and as believers, doers, and partners.

Together, we are greater than the sum of our parts.

Together, we are making our many houses a unified, many splendored **home** of humaneness, equality, and opportunity for all.

Intensified Community Policing Strategy

Even though our City's violent crime rate is down, as a mother, as a grandmother, as a veteran, and as a vocal member of Mayors Against Illegal Guns, I believe that each life ended or scarred by illegal guns, drug turf wars, or terrorism is one too many.

Citizens, neighborhood associations, faith-based leaders, and your governments must work smarter together to do more to protect innocent victims and our innocence from being destroyed by senseless violence.

Since day one, we have implemented our intensified Community Policing Strategy, which emphasizes our officers engaging neighbors, faith-based leaders, and neighborhood patriarchs and matriarchs, and vice versa, to take **ownership** of our neighborhoods.

Our Neighborhood Enforcement Units and our "Take 30" program are the meat and potatoes of Community Policing.

Together, we have made considerable progress.

We stabilized our number of full-time deployed city officers and strengthened our neighborhood partnerships and patrols.

Friends, we now have **six** Neighborhood Enforcement Units – an historic and stable high. These units provide proactive policing and abatement nuisances in six neighborhoods: York College or southwest; West-end and Salem Square; Olde Towne East and the South End; the Northeast Neighborhood; our Downtown; and, now for the first time, the Parkway Neighborhood.

A model of excellence that we strive to emulate for other neighborhoods, our downtown walking and segway unit continues to forge effective partnerships and foster communications with businesses and residents.

Including Downtown Officers McBride and Davis, **seventeen** of our officers now are certified as “Bike Police.” Our segway and bike patrols provide more face-to-face interaction and gather acute observations.

We intensified our “**Take 30**” program, where officers walk the community and learn about issues and concerns directly from neighborhood residents and stakeholders.

Hitting the bricks for just 30 minutes during a shift gives officers a closer look, while allowing them to be seen and to earn the trust and respect of neighbors.

Our officers tallied **4,667** “**Take 30s**” in 2012, totaling about **2, 334** hours of walking patrols throughout our City.

When residents and police officers work in tandem at being proactive, we not only reduce crime. We build a community of connections, communication, and confidence.

Friends, the results are in. Community Policing works.

Part I. crimes are the most serious crimes, including murder, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, larceny, arson, and motor vehicle theft.

You know, when I came into office three-and-a-half years ago, I addressed the Fraternal Order of Police, and I challenged our officers to intensify our Community Policing Strategy.

I said that, together, we can reduce Part I. crimes to below 2,000 per year.

Some thought I was overly ambitious. Others may have thought that I was flying over the cuckoo's nest.

But the results are in, and facts are stubborn things. During our administration, we reduced Part I. crimes from 2,652 in 2008 to 2,212 in 2012. **That's a 17% decrease.**

And, together, we are on the cusp of getting below 2,000 Part I. crimes per year.

I say: let's do it.

Are you with me?

In fact, since 2003, we reduced Part I. crimes by **25 percent**.¹

And, overall crime in our City of York is **down 15 percent since 2003.**

The verdict is unanimous. Our Community Policing Strategy works.

Yes, that's cause for applause.

To get illegal guns off our street, in addition to our anonymous **YORKTIPS hotline at 847-411**, we now offer **"Gun Drop Off Amnesty."** Under the amnesty, we promise **"no asking of names, no judgment, no charge"** to people who turn in any gun.

Friends, a grandfather recently walked into our Police Station and handed Chief Kahley a gun. As promised, our chief asked cast no blame or judgment and did not record the man's name. He simply thanked the grandfather for doing the right thing and took the gun to where it will never see light again.

Over two weeks and with no advertising, we've received 12 guns so far. That is 12 guns off our streets. That is 12 guns out of our children's hands. That is 12 guns that will not be used to commit a crime. That is 12 guns that will not take a life.

¹ According to the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system issued by the Pennsylvania State Police, the total number of Part I. crimes per year in the City of York have been as follows: 2003: 2,949; 2004: 2,932; 2005: 2,744; 2006: 2,590; 2007: 2,585; 2008: 2,652; 2009: 2,472; 2010: 2,498; 2011: 2,484; and 2012: 2,212.

Lives and futures are at stake, so let's rid our streets of illegal guns!

Strengthening Town-Gown Connections

We have partnered in building strategic town-gown connections that will make York an educational, cultural, and recreational epicenter that it is destined to be.

Our past is prelude to our future, as York College's physical footprint continues to intertwine with our City.

York College's humble origins were seeded in downtown York.

Within a stone's throw of the original York Academy on North Beaver sits a **new** York Academy, a K-8 international baccalaureate school.

Within a stone's throw of the original York Academy also is York College's new satellite arts program at **Marketview Arts Center**, made possible by a state grant that we secured and developed by our partner, the York County Industrial Development Authority.

Joining the Strand-Capitol and YorkArts, and a host of clustered galleries, boutiques, and studios, **Marketview Arts** is an official Pennsylvania Artists Trail destination featuring impressive working artists and galleries.

Further, York College's geographic footprint at its main campus is growing further into our City on Kings Mill Road and Springettsbury Avenue and we have partnered to welcome that growth. Tonight, I welcome further partnerships with York College to reinvent Jackson Street as a clean, green, and well-illuminated corridor – one with curb appeal, charm, antique style lighting, and small businesses.

Partnering with York College's **Students In Free Enterprise or SIFE** program, we have grown our award-winning York Business Academy, which trains start-up and existing small businesses.

HACC-York continues its strong growth in our City Industrial Park, and is forging a closer relationship with our City School District.

As promised last year, to strengthen Penn State York's appeal, in the 500 block of South Pine, the new **Residences at Ribbon Place** opened last month. A \$3 million investment in the Memorial Park Neighborhood, the 30,000 square foot former warehouse features 22 beautiful market-rate apartments

This property complements the nearby **Lofts at Ribbon Place**, a privately owned student apartment complex, featuring student housing for over 190 students.

Five New Priorities

So, tonight, knowing that progress must always be on the march, we announce five new priorities.

First, we will complete the Northwest Triangle, insisting that quality market-rate housing density that infuses our downtown with more spending power while expanding residential choices. More City market-rate housing and homeownership help to transform a cycle of concentrated poverty into a cycle of progress and promise.

To recap so far, over 9 acres have been acquired and environmentally remediated in the triangle. Four acres have been developed into 80,000 square feet of commercial space.

Two acres now are under contract for 100,000 square feet of new, market-rate housing.

Transformative results require fidelity to a bold vision, strategic planning, teamwork, and relentless persistence. We follow through for you.

Second, we will continue to strengthen Penn State York's and the south side's appeal by improving properties and parcels on South Pine and beyond. Together, in 2014, we will transform the former Simon Camera, a contaminated site, into a three million dollar, clean and green residential asset.

Third, we have engaged the nationally renowned non-profit **ArtSpace** to survey key post-industrial buildings. This year, ArtsSpace will deliver a feasibility study determining whether our York can support a live-above-work arts complex with subsidized housing for qualified artists and artisans.

This promises to be the beginning of a beautiful friendship. Our City can be **the home** of central Pennsylvania's **first** ArtSpace project.

Fourth, we will do everything in our power to partner with York College, **its Student Senate** and **Students in Free Enterprise or SIFE** to make the Rail Trail **their** safe, illuminated, and greenway artery into downtown.

We thank SIFE students who already have secured funding and volunteered to paint the red rails along our Rail Trail from the college to Lafayette Plaza.

By strengthening town-gown partnerships, growing the physical footprint of the college, improving the rail trail, improving access to the rail trail, and revolutionizing our waterfront, York can be a thriving college town in the best sense of that phrase.

York College, we love you.

And, to those students about to graduate next week, congratulations!

To all the York College students, professors, and staff here tonight, please rise so we can recognize you!

Fifth, we have a blockbuster announcement – literally a blockbuster announcement. Date night in York City soon will consist of dinner and a movie thanks to the development of over 30,000 square feet of new commercial space anchored by the new Penn Cinemas York Micro-plex.

Developed by Penn Ketchum and straddling our Downtown and west end on King Street on the banks of the Codorus, the two-screen theater will feature family friendly flicks and arthouse originals.

In its so-called heyday, our York used to be home to several intimate movie theaters. Together, we will go back to the future.

Some of you might already be familiar with Penn Ketchum's success in creating Penn Cinemas in Delaware and in Lititz. Or you may have even seen him on *Oprah*.

Penn, please rise so we can recognize you!

Penn will be available at the post-reception this evening to provide further comment and to show design layouts of this exciting endeavor.

Promises made, promises kept.

Small Seeds Bear Beautiful Fruit.

Friends, small, fragile seeds can bear beautiful fruit.

In 1777, members of the Second Continental Congress risked life and limb to cross the Susquehanna and forge the nation's first Constitution in the heart of our York – in what we now call Continental Square.

Their sacrifices chartered a fragile freedom that led to the greatest nation in human history. Their dreams and seeds, born and bred in our York, revolutionized our world and torched a beacon of hope that has emblazoned millions of hearts and minds, here and across the globe.

Continental Square is sacred ground in the story of America. And, together, and call this a sixth priority if you will, we will reconstitute Continental Square to pay tribute to the birthplace of our nation's first Constitution. We will make your square the dignified, vital, and humanized locus that York County deserves.

Yes, indeed, in your hands, small seeds bear beautiful fruit.

An impoverished, shy Vermonter with a clubfoot taught classics to young men at the original York Academy, the precursor to York College in downtown York in 1815-1816.

His name was Thaddeus Stevens.

Years later, Congressman Stevens, known as "The Great Commoner" for his ardent support of all people born in America, became the most powerful Congressman during the Civil War.

Stevens was the driving force behind major amendments to our U.S. Constitution that provide freedom, equal protection and due process for all.

When Stevens died, he became only the third person in the history of the United States to lie in state in the Capitol in Washington, D.C.

When Old Thad was just a young Thad, he got his first start in the heart of York.

Yes, small tadpoles can grow to leap over blood stained hate, subjugation, and prejudice to leap all of us into the freedom that our founding documents dared to dream.

And, yes, small seeds can bear beautiful fruit.

Consider York College.

From humble origins as the York County Academy, where Stevens taught classics on North Beaver, and the former York Collegiate Institute at the corner of Duke Street and College where Voni Grimes Gym sits today, York College moved to its present location in 1969.

Today, because of strong, steady leadership, what was once largely a commuter college is now a growing residential college that has carved out its own teaching focused, cost effective niche in higher education.

Enrolling 4,700 full-time students engaged in over 50 majors and specialties, York College is now the eighth largest private college in Pennsylvania.

During the last 20- plus years that Dr. Waldner has been at the helm, its physical footprint grew from 60 to 175 acres. Over \$250 million in new construction and renovations took place, including this beautiful Waldner Performing Arts Center.

The elders of St. Johns Episcopal Church, who, in 1776 began what became the original York County Academy on North Beaver in 1787, could not have imagined the bountiful fruits born of their early seeds.

But what hasn't changed over the last 237 years is a strong commitment to teaching and face-to-face interaction.

Small seeds can bear surprising results.

In 1969, a little girl trembled in her home on Penn Street as the Army National Guard tank rumbled by during riots.

That little girl went on to graduate from William Penn before serving in the Air Force for eight years and returning to serve her community.

Her name was Kim.

My story is one of humble, working class roots and one of hard work, persistence, and boundless love. I had a lot of support along the way from nurturing family, friends, teachers, pastors, neighbors, coaches, and, yes, even neighborhood police officers.

I am living proof that “It takes a village,” as the old African proverb says.

I am living proof of the American dream. As I look at your beaming faces, I know that, you, too, are the American dream.

That dream never yields, never dims, never dies.

You know that life is about more than just working hard, paying the bills, and getting by. You know that life has a higher moral calling.

You know that our City and our greater York community ultimately will be judged, not just by the strength of our businesses, or the beauty of our architecture, or our thriving parks and recreation.

You know that we will be judged by our partnerships against poverty and our moral commitment to our next generation.

In the greatest nation on earth, each of our children and youth deserves a quality education and a fair shot at the American dream, regardless of zip code.

Education is the most effective way to break the cycle of poverty and for our children to achieve their potential. But education cannot break the cycle of poverty when it is strangled by poverty, itself, and family dysfunction.

We need to replace the cycle of poverty with a cycle of socio-economic diversity that leads to opportunity, mentoring, progress, and prosperity.

In the long term, our systematic network of narrow boundaries, funding inequality, and poverty warehousing needs to be creatively destroyed. This broken and tragically immoral system needs to be replaced with a re-designed paradigm of justice, fairness, and opportunity.

We want a city where each young boy and girl cannot be anonymous and will not drown in a pond of poverty and instability.

We want a city where it is virtually impossible for a young girl or boy to walk outside of home without being inundated with the possibilities of hope, learning, imagination, beauty, and opportunity.

We want a city where our parks, architecture, churches, and cathedrals of learning, such as William Penn Senior High School, York College, Penn State York, and HACC-York, combined, exude an undeniable ethos of pride, purpose, and productivity.

We want a city where each child has, as his and her birth right, a quality public education, regardless of race or zip code.

We want a city where there is no time for idleness – the devil’s playground, because each youth is stretching his or her mind and body in real playgrounds, enriching classrooms, and life-altering libraries.

We want a city where our youth vigorously work their spirits, minds and bodies all the live-long day so they are too tired for any wicked nonsense at night.

We want a city where we recommit to values in ***the home***, the family, the extended family, the block, the neighborhood, our place of worship, the village, and, yes, in you.

Friends, we ***have*** a city where many dwelling places are reserved for you.

We have a city where special places are prepared just for you, so you can make a difference and be part of something special that is bigger than oneself, something noble, something righteous, something revolutionary.

We want a city whose many **houses** become a unified, many splendored **home**.

Together, we are the **home** of industry and innovation.

Together, we are the **home** of creativity unleashed.

Together, we are the **home** of one York, indivisible, with humaneness, equality, and opportunity for all.

Together, we all are Bearcats.

Together, we all are Spartans.

Together, we are moving York forward.

Together, we are the York comeback.

Together, we are the York Revolution.

Together, we all are Americans, we all are Yorkers

Who believe in justice,

Who believe in opportunity, and

Who believe in the mounting momentum of a dream.

That dream is within you.

That dream is within me.

That dream can only be seeded and seized

In our thriving **home** of the free.

So let it be, let it be, let it be!

Thank you!

May God bless you, may God bless York College, and may God bless our York!