



Eddie A. Perez
Mayor

TO: Court of Common Council and the Residents of the City of Hartford
FROM: Eddie A. Perez, Mayor
DATE: March 8, 2010
RE: State of the City Address 2010

Pursuant to Chapter V Sec.2 (i) of the City of Hartford Charter, I hereby respectfully submit my written report on the state and condition of the City of Hartford:

President Segarra, members of the Court of Common Council, and most importantly, residents of our City: Hartford is at a crossroads. We have come far, we have far to go. The State of our City today must be measured by first how far we've come and secondly, understanding and facing our challenges as "one city." But the real State of our City will be decided by how far we have to go. Our vision for tomorrow must be built on a 375-year-old legacy of hope and opportunity. Like every urban community, Hartford remains financially challenged. The demand for services remains high and growing while there's less money coming in. Hartford is one of the poorest central cities with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. Despite these obstacles, I remain proud of what we have accomplished together. We have come far, we have far to go.

As I prepared these remarks, I felt blessed. Over the years, I have played many roles--- as a community organizer, as an educational leader and now as your Mayor. Hartford has been good to me. My successes are the results of hard work, a commitment to social justice and, at times, great personal sacrifice.

One of the things I am most proud is the progress we have made in education. Five years ago, I thought long and hard before agreeing to take a leadership role with our schools. I remember what one of my mentors told me: "If you want to leave a legacy, help a young person achieve their dreams and realize their potential." That's why nothing--- nothing--- is more important than the education of our children.

The challenges back then were great. We had over one-half billion dollars in deferred maintenance in our schools; our children were going to school in

substandard classrooms; schools were losing their accreditation and parents and homeowners were leaving our schools and our City.

My decision to lead stabilized the Board of Education for the first time in two decades, moved our schools to local control from state takeover and began the current reforms which have improved our schools citywide. Because of that leadership, Hartford attracted a nationally recognized Superintendent and today we have 13 newly renovated and constructed schools.

I'm also proud to be able to pass the baton to such dedicated individuals as Ada Miranda, the Chair of the Board of Education and John Motley, the Chair of the School Building Committee. Thank you both for being such great citizen volunteers and believing in Hartford's kids!

I'm also proud that Hartford now has four nationally ranked high schools. In fact, three of the graduating seniors from University High School of Science and Engineering are going to MIT. They're with us tonight. Katie Allsop, Jennifer Ky and Josh Sibbles are Hartford's rising stars. We have come far, we have far to go.

Good schools require neighborhoods that are safe. That's why Public Safety is and continues to be a top priority of this administration. Last year, the Hartford Police Department again reduced overall serious crime to a new historic low. Yes, many challenges remain. Only if our residents, workers, and visitors feel safe, will they invest in our City's future.

That's why we must make every effort to retain 460 brave men and women on the Hartford Police Force. We must focus our resources where they are needed the most. We have seen a reduction in youth violence thanks to our Peacebuilders program and other crime prevention efforts like the Police Athletic League and Hartford Crime Stoppers.

We must continue our focus on community policing. 33-percent of serious crime in Hartford is related to domestic violence in our neighborhoods. In response, Chief Daryl Roberts has announced the formation of a new domestic violence unit. We look for the same kind of success in addressing this issue as we achieved in reducing youth violence. Hartford, we have come far, we have far to go.

During the economic downturn, together we worked hard to retain 3,900 jobs in Hartford's private sector: Aetna relocated more than 3,000 employees here; construction continues at a data center for The Hartford, retaining 600 jobs; Northeast Utilities moved its headquarters to Prospect Street, bringing in 180 jobs; and Sims Metal Management relocated to North Meadows and kept 160 jobs in the City. We have come far, we have far to go.

Our investment in local tax dollars in the Arts and Heritage Community is a big success. Per capita, Hartford's Arts Stimulus is one of the largest in the nation,

pumping more than \$2.5 million into the local economy and creating and retaining 255 jobs for 23 Arts and Heritage organizations in just six months.

And now, 58 entrepreneurs have indicated they're willing to apply for \$600,000 in Federal Stimulus funds as part of Phase 2 of our Arts Program.

I want to thank the Greater Hartford Arts Council and CEO Kate Bolduc for partnering with us and administering this significant investment that helps sustain one of Hartford's economic engines. We have come far, we have far to go.

My friends the Arts Stimulus is not a hand out. It is an investment in our creative economy that adds vibrancy to our community, produces jobs, and directly benefits local business.

The overall economy has not improved. The need is still great so we need to build on this strength. The Arts is one of Hartford's strengths.

While we cannot maintain the level of funding, we cannot afford to give up on our momentum. Last year, we put \$1 million towards the Arts. Building on that success, I propose an additional investment of \$600,000 for the Arts through a combination of federal and local funds in the next fiscal year.

Another vital jobs program has been our Capital Improvement Projects. This is an investment in our libraries, fire stations, public safety complex, and of course, our schools. The school construction program alone has put more than 1,200 Hartford residents to work through the Jobs Funnel, giving them a trade and a career with income while building our infrastructure.

What we've done for our schools we need to do for our historic parks. I am calling on the City Council to join me in the creation of a Green Ribbon Task Force to save our parks. The Task Force would be made up of friends of the parks, recognized experts, key community stakeholders, and members of the Parks Commission. By July, they will develop a maintenance, operational, and stewardship program for our parks system.

That's the long-term plan. The short-term action is the creation of a Parks Trainee Program for city residents who are re-entering the workforce after paying their debt to society. This would be funded by a combination of local and federal dollars to prepare this City's open space for people to enjoy.

Additionally, we will be answering President Obama's call for jobs and economic recovery. In this coming year, I will be working with local providers, local colleges, and businesses to bring forward a comprehensive jobs program for City residents! We have come far, we have far to go.

We're also working hard together to make the Capital City a Green City. We have reduced our carbon footprint by leveraging grants and federal dollars. These

efforts are already paying dividends. Over an 18-month period, our energy conservation projects will save us more than \$1,000,000.

We also expect to save \$250,000 in rubbish and disposal fees. “Go Green Use Blue” is more than slogan. Hartford has nearly doubled its recycling rate. By expanding SingleStream Recycling and partnering with RecycleBank, residents save money and help the City reduce its cost. We have come far, we have far to go.

We must use our resources wisely and continue to invest strategically. In about six weeks, I will submit a budget for the next fiscal year. City Council and I have recognized the challenges and are in the midst of holding an unprecedented series of workshops in an effort to achieve consensus. This will include goals for the City’s core investments of education, public safety, and economic development. This process has never been done before in Hartford. Our work is not finished. Members of Council, let me thank you for your teamwork on preparing for a difficult budget.

This kind of open dialogue and collaboration is an example of what we are achieving as a community with our One City, One Plan of conservation and development. Exchanging thoughts and sharing ideas will only lead to a stronger Hartford in the decade ahead.

Speaking of milestones, I invite you all to join Hartford’s 375th Anniversary. We kicked-off the celebration on Friday and look forward to a series of special events that will bring people together. 375 years ago, a group called “The Adventurers” came here to start measuring house lots and the settlement of Hartford began. In fact, the founder of our City--- the Reverend Thomas Hooker--- built his house right outside this window on the site of the old Hartford Times.

So, let’s celebrate our proud history! We have come far, we have far to go! Let’s continue this journey together! Si Se Puede! Yes We Can! God Bless the City of Hope and Opportunity!