

2024 State of the City Address

Introduction

Opener

With the surprise news that Mayor Stutsman delivered at **last** year's State of the City address -- when he shared that he planned to leave office before the end of his term -- some of you might be feeling a bit nervous about any surprise announcements I may drop on you today. Rest assured, after you all arrived this morning, I told Nick to lock the doors so no one could leave early.

We're all in it together, Goshen – to the very end.

Acknowledgments

Before we delve into the heart of our city's triumphs and challenges in 2023, I'd like to extend a particularly warm welcome to some of our distinguished guests in attendance.

US Representatives

First let's extend a warm welcome to Courtney Papa, local representative for US Senator Todd Young, who has graciously joined us today.

?State / County Officials Seeking Office?

To our esteemed state representatives, welcome! We know it's a delicate dance ensuring Indiana's state financial health, assisting communities like Goshen as you can while enduring the grinding pleas of mayors like me for increased revenue sharing. We genuinely appreciate your presence and willingness to listen and partner with us.

City Council

To our dedicated city councilors Graber, Lederach, Peel, Nisley, Schrock, Riegsecker, and Weddell, who dived headfirst into their new terms in January. You are the true heroes willing to work through dinnertime for the love of

Goshen, sustained only by a glass of water and a cushy rocking chair that can bend nearly to the floor to accommodate your enthusiasm or a robust debate.

City of Goshen Colleagues

Oh my! What a year. Over the past year, you navigated unexpected waters with the departure of an admired colleague, training an interim mayor, and an election.

In a year marked by uncertainty and upheaval, you remained steadfast. I've heard from three previous mayors that working in this position was the joy of their lifetime, and now I understand why.

It's clear that your commitment to our city supersedes party or person. You ensured that even in times of transition, the well-being of our community remains the top priority.

Your support was not just professional but personal, offering me guidance, patience, and humor every step of the way.

And to my Mayor's department team, Katy, Mark, Amanda, Hannah and Tracy – Thanks for your willingness to jump into the unknown and put it all on the line for the good of our City. I love coming to the office each day. Thanks for make it so.

Business and Community Leaders

As I look around this room – I'm so honored to be joined by the heart and soul of Goshen. Your generous dedication to the prosperity of our community and the vibrancy of our city is nothing short of inspiring.

The tapestry of Goshen is rich and vibrant, thanks to you. I've had the pleasure of working alongside so many of you over the years. I've seen the work ethic and the compassion that makes Goshen so uncommonly great. Today, we stand together as a testament to what can be achieved when hearts and minds work in concert for the greater good.

So, to each of you who have devoted your time, resources, and energy to the betterment of our community, please accept my deepest thanks.

Goshen Chamber of Commerce

Finally, we need to thank our gracious hosts, Nick Kieffer, Vince Turner, and the Goshen Chamber of Commerce Board.

Nick, I've had the honor of working alongside you since your term began at the Chamber in 2007. From those early days championing downtown businesses together to running the whole show, the chamber and the whole community have benefitted from your leadership.

Now, in the years that we've known one another, I've observed your willingness to do whatever it takes to support a good cause. And while I have no intention of ever letting you cut my hair with a giant pair of scissors, let me know the next time you're ready to raise money for a good Goshen cause. I'm all about the fancy pant suits and a serious competition.

Vince, thank you for being the voice and a guide for the well-being of our city. The stories you draw from residents point to our common humanity and form the glue that continues to hold us all together.

A round of applause, please, Nick Kieffer, and the entire Goshen Chamber of Commerce for making today's State of the City address possible.

What does it Mean to Celebrate Founders Day?

On this day, we pay homage to the English immigrants who laid the foundation for our city's modern form and the generations that have followed, building this city we're so proud to call home. Now the term "founders" may not fully encapsulate the diverse tapestry of cultures and communities that have contributed to Goshen's rich heritage. But, celebrating this 1831 anniversary serves as a significant reminder of moment when miscellaneous group of intrepid immigrants finally organized themselves, decided to collaborate as a community, to put their existence on paper, and most importantly - to choose a name for their town.

Interestingly, our ancestors looked to Africa for inspiration, choosing a northern province famed for its abundance, Goshen. So, once a year, we pause and take stock of what we've accomplished in 193 years – and see whether we've lived up to the ambitious namesake.

Statement of Purpose

Today, I stand before you to reflect on our journey as a community – a journey that has seen us strive to embody the ideals of our city, to bridge the gaps that remain, and to chart a course for the future of Goshen.

Let's Take a Quick Review

Questions for the Mayor

As Mayor, there are two questions that I get asked most frequently. Depending on the age of the person approaching (whether they're a kid or adult), I can almost guess the question before they ask it.

Grown-ups will lean in close, stare intently and ask, "How are you?"

And when I tell Kids that I'm a mayor, "What do you do?"

City is a Complex Organization

22 – Departments (not including the Mayor's office)

14 - Boards and Commissions

2 - Advisory Boards

1 – Kid Council comprised of five fourth-grade Kid Councilors and 1 Kid Mayor

6 – High School Seniors who serve on various board and commissions

81 – Mayor Political Appointments between Department Heads, Appointed Employees, and Board and Commission Members.

Strong Mayor State

Indiana is considered a "strong mayor" state, where the mayor is directly responsible for the city's business affairs.

The mayor appoints each department head and many board and commission members and presides over the Common Council and the Board of Public Works and Safety and Stormwater Board meetings.

The mayor prepares the annual budget that is approved by the City Council, and is ultimately responsible for all operations within each City department.

Some People think you have more Power than you actually do:

STORY: Little girl at Goshen Brewing company

Record of Accomplishments

On one hand, the work of a city involves the practical mechanics of day-to-day living. On the other hand, it encompasses the entire physical, social, and economic environment in which people reside. Essential services such as public safety (including police and fire services), waste collection, water supply, sewage treatment, roads and sidewalks, parks, education, and economic development shape every aspect of our environment.

Drawn to work where values-driven idealism and results-driven pragmatism meet: **No greater example than local government.**

When we examine Goshen's statistics, we gain a deeper understanding of the extensive efforts that go into each aspect of our service delivery. Allow me to share just a small sampling of the accomplishments our team achieved in 2023 that may pique your interest.

- 153 miles of streets maintained
- 1,836 miles (about half the width of the United States) driven by street sweepers between March and November at around 10 miles per hour
- 4,000 tons of pavement applied

- 23,600 takeoffs and landings at Goshen Airport (putting our city in the top 12 busiest airports in the state)
- 90 student pilots learned to fly at the airport facility
- 110 behavioral health crisis cases addressed by our Behavioral Health Coordinator, responding to mental health, drug and alcohol misuse, and homelessness
- 8,321 traffic stops
- 4,803 police cases
- 16,513 calls from the public requesting police response
- 5,110 Emergency response calls by the EMS and Fire Department
- 30 miles of trails maintained
- 27 beautiful parks throughout the entire city
- 13,809 parks program participants: approximately 8,622 youth and 5,187 adults
- 8,691 visits to Shanklin Park Pool between May and August
- 299 kids taught to swim
- 260 vehicles and 540 pieces of mechanical equipment maintained by 5 very busy mechanics
- 1,143,808,868 gallons of water treated and pumped through the City of Goshen
- 1,342,000,000 gallons of wastewater treated, purified, and returned to the Elkhart River
- 9,172,000 pounds of "flushable wipes" biosolids trash sent to landfill
- 486 times utility team had to unclog lift stations in 2023 costing more than \$30,000 in additional labor for just this task of removing items that are not flushable.

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## First 285 days

1. BUDGET: Planning the 2024 budget (June – October)

2. UNIONS: Negotiated contracts with three Unions (majority of city employees) (July – September)
3. TECHNOLOGY: Established a Technology Department – Goal of strengthening the ways in which we are able to use technology.
4. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: Strengthening our relationship with the business community
5. TRANSPARENCY: Transition our Paper Ordinance to an Online Ordinance System
6. NEIGHBORHOODS: Began a Neighborhood Re-Engagement Program
7. BLIGHT REDUCTION: Blight Reduction Program
8. SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP: Launched a Partnership with Goshen Community Schools – Firefighter and EMT Training

## Challenges

While we've successfully navigated a difficult transition year and accomplished some great things – we acknowledge that Goshen faces serious challenges.

1. Housing availability
  - a. 105 houses listed for sale in February housing report
  - b. Vacancy rate comparable to Alexandria, Virginia.
  - c. 20,000 commuters to Goshen for work each day
  - d. Report from StructurePoint: estimated 5,000 houses needed immediately to address Goshen's housing needs
  - e. Cities across the US examining restrictive and outdated
    - i. Bring back the daughty house
2. Escalating costs of infrastructure maintenance
  - a. Police car that cost \$45,000 three years ago is now \$70
  - b. \$250,000 street sweeper now \$400,000 – and it takes 18 months to 2 years to acquire one

- c. \$40M dollars' worth of repairs and \$2.5 M annual budget to maintain them
  
- 3. Public Safety and Engineering Shortages leading to
  - a. Statewide shortage of police officers
  - b. 2024, Mishawaka Police will make \$90,000
  - c. Extreme strain on staff and our ability to deliver high-quality customer service
  
- 4. Volatility of our local economy
  - a. Manufacturing historically been a cornerstone of Goshen's economy, with companies in the RV (Recreational Vehicle) industry, automotive parts, and other manufacturing sectors providing a substantial number of jobs to the local population.
  - b. While this is a tremendous boon to our local economy, the cyclical nature of industry that craters during recessions and booms between them gives us all our share of heartburn. It's difficult to forecast RV demand, analysts and economists struggle to correlate gas prices, unemployment, or interest rates over time with sales.
  - c. Recent study by Ball State University suggested that 75% of the workforce in Goshen is at risk of job loss due to automation
  - d. The more skills, the more adaptable our workforce becomes
  
- 5. Financial Strain on Cities to do More with Less – Budget Planning 2024
  - a. Big Four (Primary funds that comprise the majority of our budget)
  - b. Goshen had adequate cash balances
  - c. Appear high in large part to delays on projects from COVID years happening now. Very fortunate to have saved some additional reserves.
  - d. Beginning to spend down some of those balances – but with a great deal of caution.



- e. Good News: Goshen's Net Assessed Value continues to increase.
- f. Bad News: Continue to face the adverse effects of property tax caps (effectively "breaking" the circuit of escalating taxes)
  - i. There are 3 types of property tax caps and Indiana has two of the three
  - ii. An assessment limit sets a cap for how much the assessed value of your property can increase from one period to the next.
  - iii. A rate limit sets a cap for the rate at which a municipality can tax your property. This limit can help keep your tax bill from increasing when there hasn't been a change to your property's assessment.
  - iv. A levy limit caps how much property tax a municipality can collect. The levy limit refers to all revenue, not only the revenue from one property.
    - 1. 1% Residential
    - 2. 2% Agricultural
    - 3. 3% Business
  - v. Increase capped by tax caps, reduces the circuit breaker losses

## 6. Cross-Cultural Community

- a. Goshen has been a community of immigrants since its inception in 1831. With each new group that arrives, it's inevitable that tensions arise as we re-form expectations about what it means to live together with different customs, practices, food, celebrations, religion, music loudness levels, and laws of the land.

## Solutions for 2024

Goshen is Facing these Challenges Head-on, with the crew of dedicated public servants and a community of stakeholders behind us.

## 1. Housing

- a. **Strategic partnerships** with developers (7 potential partnerships)
- b. **READI 2.0 Investments** – Indiana Department of Economic Development
- c. **Examining our considerations** of “We’ve always done it this way”
  - i. Strong Towns visitor, Chuch Mahron, compelled us to think about the way we plan and zone our cities and whether or not this is best practices going forward.
  - ii. Senator Todd Young’s, “YIMBY” Act would increase transparency in land use and zoning decisions, ultimately encouraging localities to eliminate barriers to much-needed housing
- d. **While we need to grow: we are exercising caution in WHERE we grow.** We must focus on growth that is infill, utilizing existing utility and road infrastructure whenever possible to reduce sprawl and the inevitable infrastructure maintenance costs that come with outward expansion.
- e. **Addressing blight** – 20 houses since December
  - i. No one wants to live next to a blighted property.
  - ii. No property owner has the right to diminish your property value by leaving it vacant and a safe haven for crime and illicit activity.
- f. **Neighborhood Engagement Program**

## 2. Escalating Costs Materials

- a. Careful management of the budget
- b. Utilizing five-year capital plans to manage our asset inventory and maintenance schedules

- c. Mattie Lehman and Boston Snyder – Geographic Information Systems
- d. Incorporating concepts from the business community that enable us to be smart and employ continuous improvement
- e. Investments in technology – adding personnel to our tech department
  - i. STORY: Use of Artificial Intelligence to locate any lead pipe connection
  - ii. STORY: Using heat maps and modeling to ascertain which parks, trails, and walking paths get the most use
  - iii. STORY: Snowplow – salt distribution, cameras and sensors to detect when we’re applying salt, what routes have been used, and even the designs of routes to optimize our efficiency.
  - iv. STORY: Cemetery plot confirmation
  - v. STORY: Make it easier for people to find and access information

### 3. Public Safety and Engineering Shortage

- a. STORY: Sacrifice of PD Leadership: Give it to them
- b. STORY: Meeting with local business owners
- c. STORY: Dustin:

4. **Volatility in our Local Economy:** We must focus on Collaboration and Partnership with local businesses, focus on customer service delivery, and champion quality of place initiatives that retain and grow talent.

#### a. Continuous Improvement

Maintaining strong relationships with our local business community is now more crucial than ever. As a city, we commit to listen and work closely with both business and community leaders. This means actively anticipating and understanding their

needs, engaging with them effectively, and offering support for their initiatives.

We commit to simplifying the process of conducting business with the city, eliminating needless obstacles without compromising the public's safety or interests.

**b. Entrepreneurial Spirit**

The city has a strong entrepreneurial spirit, supported by local business and community organizations. We want to partner and support you on the initiatives and programs you've created. We welcome your ideas on ways to support small businesses and startups help foster innovation and economic growth.

**c. Support for Local Businesses**

The bread and butter of our City is our local business community. We're partner with the Chamber, Downtown Goshen, Goshen Arts and Events, Economic Development Corporation to assist start-ups and local artisans.

**5. Cross Cultural Community**

**a. Cultural Diversity and Inclusivity**

Goshen's cultural landscape is enriched by its diversity. The city has become a welcoming place for people from various backgrounds, including a significant Hispanic community, which contributes to the city's cultural richness and economic vitality. Efforts to celebrate diversity and promote inclusivity are evident in city events, educational programs, and local governance.

**b. Business with Hispanic Community**

When it comes to doing business with the city, we're looking at

ways to improve communication. Commit to doing a better job of engaging the Latino entrepreneurs and business leaders. Making sure that our processes are easily understood. Providing assistance and guidance through processes of developing businesses here.

- c. All of us in this room have tremendous power to decide who is at the table with us. Who are we inviting to sit with us on boards, to join with us as business partners. I encourage each of you to look for talent in unexpected places.
- d. And, if you're a person that supports Goshen PD, Talk to your neighbors before you make one of those 15,000 calls to Goshen PD to address a complaint that may be resolved by having a conversation.

## Why Do I know Goshen will be Successful

### **Community Engagement and Cohesion**

Goshen boasts a remarkably tight-knit community, with a strong emphasis on volunteerism and civic participation. The city's numerous festivals, community events, and public initiatives foster a sense of belonging and pride among residents. This level of engagement is a cornerstone of Goshen's identity, contributing significantly to its resilience and vibrancy.

### **Educational Institutions**

Goshen is home to Goshen College, a well-regarded liberal arts college, and other educational institutions that contribute to the local economy by providing education and training, attracting students from outside the area, and fostering community engagement and

development projects.

## 6. Sustainable Development Initiatives

Unlike many cities of its size, Goshen has made sustainability a priority, integrating green policies and practices into its development plans. From renewable energy projects to extensive recycling programs and the promotion of green spaces, Goshen's commitment to environmental stewardship sets a standard for small cities. These efforts not only contribute to the global movement towards sustainability but also position Goshen as a forward-thinking community, potentially attracting businesses and individuals with similar values.

At the end of the day, we all rise and fall together.

## Closing (5 minutes)

I have experienced the dramatic power of a community that comes together to create positive change.

- Multi-generational living destination.
- Transformative arts and culture projects
- Entrepreneurs grow and build empires of success.
- Rally in crisis. (Floods, tornados, pandemics)
- Competitors address tough community challenges.

Every time I've been able to bring people together around a common cause - people who may have vastly different agendas or views - I've found my deepest sense of purpose.

We decide every day whether we'll be civil

Mow your lawn. Shovel the walk. Rake the leaves. Edge the sidewalk. Wash the windows. Plant daffodils. Show your neighbors that you believe your neighborhood is a worthy investment.

Volunteer for a neighborhood organization. HOA, Neighborhood Church, your local elementary school. They desperately need your support.

Goshen Comes Together in times of Need

Here's a great example: **STORY: Christopher Jones**

Addressing Blight, typically