

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS 2006

Wednesday, July 12, 2006

Webb Municipal Building Atrium

Thank you to my colleagues on City Council, the District Attorney, Auditor and our Election Commissioners for being here and for being our partners in change. Thank you to the people of Denver for your belief in us and your daily participation in this ongoing process of transforming government. Thank you to our City employees for your flexibility, innovation and ability to grow. And thank you to our families for inspiring us and supporting us as we work to create the kind of city in which all families – present and future – can thrive.

This building – named for my predecessor Wellington E. Webb – reminds us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Not only do we inherit the vision of those who came before us, but we have the potential to shape our community long after we are gone. During our campaign, I talked about seeing farther by standing on the shoulders of giants. Now, we must also provide the shoulders upon which future generations can stand.

We should give future generations a city that is sustainable in all senses of the word. Sustainability is not only about creating a strong economy that also protects the environment. True sustainability should ensure that economic opportunity flows out into all neighborhoods. It requires that all neighborhoods be safe, have good schools and offer access to a high quality of life – because democracy teaches us that for successes to be sustained, they must be shared.

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Clearly, a sustainable city must be friendly to the environment. In April 2005, we launched the **City of Denver's Sustainable Development Initiative**. We had an active first year that included a **Western water lecture series**, an **expanded recycling program**, the **Green Cities Forum** and the first-ever **national Peak Oil Conference**. Today, we are unveiling **Greenprint Denver** – a bold action plan to provide a strong environmental and economic legacy for Denver.

Denver is almost unique in the nation by having Blueprint Denver – a comprehensive planning document that protects and enhances our neighborhoods. In the same vein, Greenprint Denver will allow us to expand that comprehensive planning approach to our relationship with energy and the environment.

This vision is made possible by the commitment of many City departments – as well as by the members of our newly formed **Greenprint Council** – a leadership group that brings together civic, business and environmental leaders to help shape this agenda. I'd like to ask the Greenprint Council members who are here today to please stand so we can thank you for your service.

By focusing on areas that offer opportunities for local government innovation and regional cooperation, the plan we are unveiling focuses on what we can do today. Even if there's a 2 percent chance that 95 percent of the world's top climate scientists are right about the dire consequences of global warming – we run the risk of being the first generation in history to leave the next generation a problem for which there is no solution. We must have a sense of urgency to seize the low-hanging fruit that saves taxpayer money, preserves the environment and creates economic opportunity.

We will construct solar and methane power plants capable of powering and heating the equivalent of more than 2,500 homes by 2007. We will expand the City's "Green Fleet" by replacing light-duty vehicles wherever possible with hybrids or the highest-efficiency vehicles available. And we will complete the transition of our entire diesel fleet to biodiesel. With rising **energy** costs, these are fiscally responsible efforts – regardless of one's stance on climate change.

This fall, Denver will host the Urban Land Institute and international Greenbuild conference, giving us access to the best urban planning and energy innovations from around the world. **Green building** is a primary sustainability measure. We will be requiring all new City buildings and major municipal renovations to be certified under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED-Silver standards and meet EPA Energy Star guidelines. Our goal is to reduce total energy use in municipal facilities by one percent per square foot annually. We will partner with the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation to advance energy efficiency in the private sector, realizing significant Brownfields redevelopment opportunities and creating 1,000 new training and job opportunities in renewable energy and green industries by 2011. It's no longer just about blue-collar jobs and white-collar jobs – we want green-collar jobs.

Many of these goals are supported by the City's new **franchise agreement** with Xcel Energy – that will go before Denver voters this August – providing Denver citizens an opportunity to ratify new opportunities in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

In a climate like ours, **water conservation** has to be a key part of any sustainability effort.

In addition to significantly improving water quality in the South Platte River by 2011...the City of Denver, in partnership with Denver Water, intends to embark on the most aggressive water conservation program in the history of Colorado. We will work to help Denver Water achieve a 22% reduction in system-wide water use in the next decade – accelerating their original 2050 goals by 35 years. We will do this by fostering a new water conservation ethic in Denver – and ultimately across the Front Range – balancing the moral imperative of conservation with the fiscal benefits of avoiding costly new storage projects.

We, at the City, will begin by getting our own house in order – employing state-of-the-art water efficiency practices in our buildings, park irrigation, swimming pools, plumbing and cooling towers. We will expand and reissue Executive Order 87 on water

conservation. Our departments will develop 10-year budget plans to become more water efficient – and we will encourage Denver Public Schools, the Zoo, our museums, and sports stadiums to do the same.. We will work with Metro Denver homebuilders to promote greater water efficiency in homes and landscaping, and we will encourage our regional neighbors to pass ordinances supporting water conservation as well. An annual water conservation report card will help track our progress on this ambitious endeavor.

A recent study by American Forests found that urban forest in seven Front Range communities contributed over \$10 million per year in stormwater management, air quality improvements and air cooling that reduced air conditioning costs. We can do even better. Our goal is to triple **Denver’s tree canopy** from 6 percent to 18 percent tree cover. We will accomplish this by launching an unprecedented regional initiative to plant a million new trees over the next 20 years. We have already begun conversations with regional mayors. The idea was warmly received at a meeting with more than a 100 DPS principals, and we hope to include other regional school districts as well.

These are ambitious goals, but ones that are worthy of the Mile High City and its residents.

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The completion of T-REX this fall and of FasTracks over the next decade presents many opportunities in regards to sustainable **urban design and transportation**. In the process, we will decrease local reliance on automobiles by increasing public transit use and access, implementing bike and pedestrian enhancements, and promoting transit-oriented development.

I want to congratulate Governor Owens, as well as the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Regional Transportation District, on the impending completion of **T-REX** this fall. The Southeast Corridor Light Rail line, expanded highway capacity, and transit-oriented development opportunities will transform the way many metro area residents live, travel and commute.

The City of Denver’s draft **Transit-Oriented Development Strategic Plan** is now available online – providing a tactical framework for public discussion.

The first comprehensive update of Denver’s **zoning code** in 50 years – aimed at implementing the community vision of Blueprint Denver – is making steady progress under the leadership of our citizen task force. **Main Street Zoning** – piloted on East Colfax - is a great example of early progress in this multi-year effort. It is through this process that our community can resolve conflicts between the desires of new families for larger homes and the preservation of a neighborhood’s historic character.

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As we work to create growth that has less of an impact on our natural world, let us keep in mind that jobs sustain communities. There can be no such thing as a sustainable city without a strong economy. Local government should help create opportunity, rather than obstruct it. That is why we worked so hard to achieve the passage of **Referendum C**. I want to thank Denver area voters for investing in our state's future. And since this is his last State of the City Address as governor, I again want to thank Governor Bill Owens for his bipartisan leadership on this critical fiscal initiative. I'd also like to thank him for his friendship and always speaking his mind – whatever the issue.

From the growth of Frontier Airlines...to United's emergence from bankruptcy...to the return of Southwest Airlines...**Denver International Airport** has had a tremendous year – both in record passenger traffic and revenue growth – and its designation as the “Best Airport in North America” by both *Business Traveler* and *Travel Savvy* magazines.

DIA has played a key role in the growth of our **tourism** industry. The completed expansion of the Colorado Convention Center and the on-time, on-budget opening of the Hyatt Convention Center Hotel have reaped tremendous dividends. 2005 was the best tourism year Denver has ever had with 10.4 million overnight visitors spending \$2.43 billion. Convention bookings this year are up 44 percent over 2005.

These numbers will continue to increase in the years ahead. The Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau launched the **largest consumer tourism advertising campaign in Denver's history** this April, a \$3 million integrated marketing campaign.

With the help and advocacy of Denver City Council, two decades of vacancy at the Lowenstein Theatre has now ended...helping to reinvigorate East Colfax. To assist similar projects, we are establishing a comprehensive **Community Development Financial Institution** to support residential and commercial development, small business start-ups, and asset-building activities in underserved neighborhoods. This will be a vital tool in our **comprehensive neighborhood revitalization** program, which we announced in February.

After concluding Denver's **first disparity** study in nine years, we have crafted a unique opportunity to enable more Women- and Minority-Business Enterprises to graduate into competition with other small businesses for larger government contracts.

Since it opened in January 2005, the Denver **Business Assistance Center** – to my left – has assisted more than 4,200 entrepreneurs with convenient one-stop access to local, state and federal business resources.

Development plans can now be submitted digitally, aiding in the ongoing improvements to our **permitting and development review systems**. Our focus on performance improvements resulted in a 21% increase in the number of same-day commercial project permits issued and response time reductions in Neighborhood Inspection Services (NIS) from an average of six days to three days for non-emergency inspections.

By approaching workforce development on a regional basis, the **Workforce Board of Metro Denver** received a **\$15 million workforce development grant** from the U.S. Department of Labor this year to prepare local workers for jobs in aerospace, bioscience, energy, and information technology.

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A sustainable city is a safe city.

Since 2003, we have invested \$17 million to put 465 new police recruits on the streets and \$22 million in new safety-related technology enhancements. We also retained the services of the internationally recognized Hanover Justice Group to implement new crime-reduction strategies.

Their help is enabling the Denver Police Department to leverage real-time data and new crime analysis tools to prioritize neighborhood crime problems and solve them creatively. Initial **demonstration projects** in Westwood and Capitol Hill are delivering promising results and strategies – like Broken Windows policing – that will be customized to meet the unique safety needs of neighborhoods across Denver.

Thanks to the hard work of our officers and community partners, crime in Denver is down 8.4 percent the first six months of 2006 compared to the first half of 2005. Today is an opportunity to celebrate this progress and renew our commitment to making Denver a safe place to live.

Graffiti is one public safety issue that requires new strategies for us to obtain the upper hand. We will convene a **graffiti summit** in the next year – bringing together experts and community stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive citywide approach to this nuisance.

All of these efforts will be enhanced when the Police Department's new **Records Management System** becomes fully operational in 2007, putting more and better information in the hands of street officers and enriching the collaboration across the entire Department.

This past year, we committed to updating the **Fire Department's fleet** to bring all fire apparatus within a 20-year replacement cycle by the end of 2007. We are on track to fulfill that pledge.

The schematic design for the new **Justice Center's** courthouse and detention facility will be presented to the public in September. We expect the Denver Sheriff Department to bring its new **Jail Management System** online in the coming year. The improved reporting capabilities and analysis tools will enable the Department – and our **Crime Prevention and Control Commission** – to strategically focus resources on programs designed to reduce recidivism.

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We must help others sustain themselves, or else we will have to sustain them. A safe, sustainable city minimizes the number of citizens subjected to desperate circumstances such as homelessness.

Our **10-year plan to end homelessness** - *Denver's Road Home* - has been "on the streets" for one year now. During this time, 423 new units of housing assistance have been added, 701 homeless people have been assisted with work, 537 individuals received treatment services, 286 families received eviction assistance, and 108 families have been partnered with our faith-based mentoring teams. We have seen an outpouring of support from the community. *Project Homeless Connect* events coordinated support from 40 different businesses to connect over 1,200 homeless individuals with services. Denver has received national recognition for these efforts – and the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative's annual Point-in-Time Survey showed that – six months into the plan's implementation – homelessness had declined by 11.4 percent.

We are grateful to our partners in the business, nonprofit and faith communities that have made Denver's Road Home a priority.

One hundred percent of year one was funded, and we have already raised 70 percent of the funds necessary for years two through four. We are pleased to announce today that *Denver's Road Home* will be making its first round of **private funding allocations** for the 2006-07 fiscal year – providing 16 homeless service providers with approximately \$2.5 million in private funds. We are especially grateful to our partners at United Way, the Downtown Denver Partnership, and local foundations, businesses and individuals for their support of our Community Appeal to End Homelessness.

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The successes that we achieve today cannot be sustained tomorrow unless our children receive the best education possible. A sustainable community requires that we learn how to grow our own educated workforce.

We are proud of innovative programs like the "**5 By 5 Project**," which offers free cultural experiences to Denver's Head Start families. In the **Lights on After-School Initiative**, we have worked with the DPS Foundation and United Way to provide after-school programs, improving attendance, grades and test scores.

We have partnered with United Way to create the **Youth Mentoring Collaborative** - a coalition of 16 youth-mentoring organizations. The Youth Mentoring Collaborative is launching a recruitment drive this month and anyone interested in volunteering can call United Way's 2-1-1 hotline.

In February 2004, we hosted "*Invest in Success*," a daylong summit on **early childhood education** that engaged nearly 300 local business and civic leaders in identifying

strategies to improve access to – and availability of – quality preschool programs for all of Denver’s children. At that summit, we launched the Mayor’s Leadership Team on Early Childhood Education.

After 30 months of work, the Leadership Team is asking City Council to refer a question to the November ballot asking Denver voters to raise the sales tax rate .12 percent – or 12 cents on every \$100 purchase - to fund a high quality, parental choice preschool program for Denver’s four-year-olds.

Study after study has demonstrated that few investments match the returns of quality early childhood education. Not only do graduation rates and subsequent economic opportunities increase, but destruction of private property, crimes against persons, and justice system costs decline. When we can ensure that all of Denver’s children have an equal chance at the starting gate, many more will successfully cross the finish line.

And that finish line shouldn’t end with high school graduation. Our administration is committed to the vision that all Denver graduates should be able to attend college – regardless of their financial situation. For the past two-and-a-half years, we have been working to raise private funds to make the universal promise of **college access** possible. During the past year, we have met with several presidents of Colorado universities and colleges to begin building the partnerships that will be vital to this program’s success. We are still actively fundraising and anticipate rolling out the program in 2008.

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As individuals, art and culture sustain us – lift us up. A sustainable community embraces the history and culture of all of its citizens.

During the past year, the Denver Office of Cultural Affairs introduced a **Public Art Guide** to downtown Denver and welcomed approximately 20,000 visitors to 76 architecturally significant buildings during the second annual **Doors Open Denver**. We also announced Chris Ransick as our new **poet laureate** and launched the **Poetry in Motion** partnership with the Regional Transportation District. This fall, we are preparing to launch the third annual **One Book, One Denver** program.

Our first **Building Creative Business Expo** provided 1,000 members of our creative community an opportunity to learn about various resources available to help grow creative businesses. Later this year, we will launch a **Creative Enterprises Revolving Loan Fund**.

We are rapidly becoming an international cultural destination. The **Ellie Caulkins Opera House** is destined to become regarded as one of the great opera houses in the world. The Frederic C. Hamilton Building, opening this October, will make the **Denver Art Museum** one of the most talked about museums in the universe. The **Museum of Contemporary Art** has broken ground and is slated to open next year. And the **Clyfford Still Museum** has acquired a site and will select an architect this year. The convergence

of these enduring projects – each uniquely important and impressive – are putting Denver on the cultural map as a place to see cutting-edge art and architecture.

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Preserving our open spaces is vital to a sustainable city. Last October, we launched the **Parks and People Partnership** – creating a citywide coalition of trained volunteers to monitor our parks. This May, we also launched our **Park Ranger Program** providing seasonal rangers to patrol Denver’s urban and mountain parks.

Over the past year, numerous **improvements** were completed including significant renovations at Elyria Park, the expansion of the Melrose Garden at Sloan’s Lake Park, and landscape improvements at George Morrison Senior Park. In the year to come, several new improvements will be completed, including the grand opening of the Lakewood Dry Gulch Disc Golf Course in West Denver, the redesign of Broadway Triangle Park in the Ballpark neighborhood, and new restrooms at Barnum Park, Bear Creek and Harvey Park. We’ve also received a \$75,000 GOCO planning grant for our mountain parks.

We extended the outdoor pool schedule by two weeks this year, created the First Annual “Buds to Blooms” guided flowerbed tours, and launched a free summer movie series at 17 Denver parks.

Mayor Robert Speer began contemplating the potential of **Civic Center Park** some hundred years ago. A century later, we are very much connected to his legacy. In two years, we will celebrate Denver’s sesquicentennial. We must be willing to entertain a vision worthy of Speer, that places it among the most beautiful and popular urban parks in America – a vision of a park that could be our gift to future generations. That vision must be the culmination of a comprehensive public process.

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In order to sustain the public trust, good government requires genuine public processes. Sustainable government must be transparent, accountable and fiscally responsible.

When the **2007 budget** is proposed later this year, it will contain the departmental outcomes and performance measurements which all City departments helped to create. These performance goals – combined with public input we received at the *Partnership Denver: Neighbors Building Solutions* series earlier this year – will ensure the community’s priorities are reflected in the budget process.

Thanks to the efficiencies our employees have found, we’ve been able to grow our fund balance and strengthen our fiscal position – which is what helps any organization survive downturns. Our strong bond ratings reflect this sound fiscal management. That we were able to grow our **annual reserve fund balance** from roughly \$88 million in 2003 to \$120

million in 2005- is a tremendous feat in light of the fiscal challenges we faced. Even with that growth, we are still \$20 million below the City's boom-time 2000 level peak.

We have asked our **Blue Ribbon Task Force on Financial Management** to assess our current reserve policies and to make recommendations regarding the appropriate size of the City's reserve and how it should be expended during a recession. The Task Force is also exploring concerns expressed by outside auditors about the decentralized and fragmented nature of the City's financial structure. We appreciate the Auditor's involvement in this process as we share the goals of fiscal responsibility and government accountability.

As we approach the 2007 budget process – when we hope more revenues are available – we are committed to continuing to restore services that were reduced in recent years. This year, we restored all of the park flower beds, began reinstating library hours and restoring some of the sacrifices our employees have made.

With the economic challenges of the past several years, many **infrastructure needs** were understandably put on hold. We are committed to addressing these deferred needs, but we also want to do so in a fiscally responsible, strategic and forward-looking manner. For this reason, we are in the process of identifying qualified people to help us create an Infrastructure Task Force to examine our capital facility and infrastructure needs, helping to establish priorities and time frames by January 2007.

Our capital facility needs are somewhat lessened as new technology increases the efficiency of City government. Our consolidated Technology Services Agency has been driving innovation across every department in the City. Our **Geographic Information Systems** – or G-I-S – is a national model. From mapping vote centers to TOD opportunities, from real-time public safety information to finding leaky sewers, GIS has become a powerful tool for the City and an invaluable resource for the public. Our zoning maps are now in a digital GIS format, easily updated and available online.

G-I-S will be critical to the success of 3-1-1. It was during our first State of the City Address that we announced our plans for a **3-1-1 call center**. After two years of development, it launched last Friday. It is incredible. Call 3-1-1 for any non-emergency City service or question. In the first five days of operation, our 3-1-1 call center processed 4,647 inquiries and service requests.

3-1-1 will dramatically improve our customer service. It will reduce the burdens on 9-1-1 and provide vital data to improve the City's operational performance. But most importantly – it will help Denver taxpayers – our bosses – get what they need from local government. We are grateful to all of the City employees in virtually every City agency who worked so hard to make this possible. We have already engaged regional mayors in discussions about how to eventually provide 3-1-1 on an integrated regional basis.

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Last year, few people here could imagine a system like 3-1-1. By next year, people will be taking it for granted.

Our world is changing faster than we ever imagined possible. Denver is a city full of ideas. Our challenge – and it becomes more important every day – is to let those ideas flourish.

If our city is to become truly sustainable, we must evolve continuously. Our ability to sustain our present quality of life will be a function of how well and how quickly we can adapt. The speed with which we need to change allows no room for ego. It demands collaboration. For the next generation to be able to see farther than we have, we are going to need many shoulders.

This is an opportunity to be part of something bigger than all of us. An opportunity to connect with a history that long preceded us and to help shape a future that will long succeed us.

We are but temporary stewards of this city – and as such – we must commit ourselves to leaving an even better economy and future for the generations that follow.

As our administration – and many on this stage – enter the final year of our first term, let me assure you - there will be no slowing down. In the days to come, we intend to sustain our sense of urgency and maintain the same high expectations for what can be accomplished. Creating a city that is truly sustainable – in all senses of the word – requires nothing less.

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