



## STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS 2005

Ladies and gentlemen, fellow citizens of Denver – this City has never surrendered to fate. We know that human beings hold and exercise enormous powers of choice. In the last two years, I have seen you deploy those powers of choice in the cause of making this a better city, a better region and a better state.

We are privileged to live in a place where the landscape and the sky constantly invite us to think big and take the long view. In the last two years, I have seen hundreds – no, thousands – of Denverites say “yes” to that invitation.

The place where we meet – Civic Center – is Denver’s front porch. Westerners have never led the nation in the use of front porches; we have been drawn more to the patio and the backyard. But as we deepen our commitment to this spectacular setting we call home, Denver residents find more reasons to converge in public places like this site, places where we can convene to think about our shared fortunes and give shape to our common dreams.

Civic Center represents Denver’s rich history of civic idealism and engagement. From the people who first envisioned this park a century ago – to the people who are now re-energizing it – this park represents our past and future ability to translate inspiration into action.

Here, standing at the confluence of municipal and state government, a growing arts and cultural center, and vibrant business and residential neighborhoods, we chart our course for the future. Our prosperity relies upon the ties that unite our civic, cultural and commercial endeavors.

We inherit but we are not bound by the choices our predecessors made. We gather recognizing that the choices we make now will write our collective will upon this landscape in ways that will endure into the distant future.

The people of Denver are people of courage and enterprise, ingenuity and good will. With those qualities so well-represented among us, we can set an example for the nation – and, really, the world – as we build on our strengths, honestly acknowledge and address our weaknesses, and celebrate the possibilities of common ground.

\* \* \*

For those of you keeping track, today is one week before the second anniversary of our administration. Exactly 103 weeks have passed since the day when a new mayor, new auditor, new city council, and new election commissioners took office.

On behalf of my fellow elected officials, including our new district attorney, thanks to all of you for being partners in our ongoing efforts to make Denver the best city possible in which to live, work and play.

Thanks to the hard-working, dedicated employees of the City and County of Denver for their sacrifices and their commitment to innovation and enhanced customer service.

Thanks to our partners throughout the region and state who know that Ben Franklin, then planning rebellion, was onto something important when he said: "We must all hang together, or assuredly we will hang separately."

And thanks to our families who are with us every step of the way. In particular, I want to thank my wife Helen and son Teddy for their constant inspiration and support.

\* \* \*

Two years have passed more quickly than I would have ever imagined, and I stand here today to say that I am inspired by all that we have accomplished together.

**The most diverse administration in Denver's history... Two tough balanced budgets... Personnel system modernization... United and Frontier agreements... Two school bond initiatives... Citywide alley-paving... One Book, One Denver... FasTracks... SCFD...Police reform...the Justice Center – and my God, Denver – thank you for supporting the Justice Center. ...Doors Open Denver... Crime Control and Prevention Commission... Our Sustainable Development Initiative... And, yes, even parking meter reform...**

Far from resting on these accomplishments, we must be emboldened by them.

\* \* \*

On May 13, I attended the funeral of Detective Donald Young. His funeral procession passed by this very park, where the streets were lined with city employees who left their offices to pay their respects. We may all work on different pieces of the City and County puzzle, but at the end of the day, we are all on the same team.

Throughout history, a city's first obligation has been to protect its citizens from harm and fear.

Despite the City's ongoing fiscal constraints, we increased our police budget by eight percent this year. This will enable us to hire 169 **new officers** by the end of 2005 to stem the tide of attrition and put more officers on our streets. This year, we will find the

resources to again fill our training academy classes.

Lowering crime rates, however, is not just a matter of money. We must deploy our resources strategically to achieve maximum results. This year our police department began using intensive **data collection and analysis** as a tool to identify crime trends and respond more quickly.

**Improved technology** is an important foundation for our crime-fighting efforts. Before the year's end, we will provide officers in every police vehicle with the capability of electronically accessing national crime information. Next year, our officers will be able to receive mug shots in their vehicles. And by the end of 2007, we will integrate all of our safety department and court records, allowing us to better track people through the justice system and target alternatives to sentencing and diversionary efforts.

Over the past year, we worked with City Council to develop a comprehensive new **civilian oversight system**, and this week, the **Office of the Independent Monitor** is up and running. We believe that this office, and its companion **Citizen Oversight Board**, will become a vital resource for the community and law enforcement, inspiring confidence through greater accountability and transparency. A safe city, more than anything else, depends on the community and law enforcement working together.

\* \* \*

Creating a safer city is important because it is the foundation on which we build prosperity.

Thanks to City Council for their partnership in ongoing economic development efforts. City Council has taken a leadership role with the **Colorado Colfax Marathon** and the long-awaited redevelopment of the **Lowenstein Theatre**, both of which create significant opportunities in the ongoing, tri-city effort to reinvigorate the Colfax corridor.

Thanks to the leadership of outgoing City Council President Elbra Wedgeworth for her role in ensuring that decades of dreams for **Dahlia Square** are finally realized. We began clean-up efforts at Dahlia Square this past year, which is the first step in re-developing and revitalizing the long-troubled shopping center.

And thanks to the voters for their tremendous achievement in passing **FasTracks**, the most ambitious mass transit effort in the country today. As we begin its implementation, we are working with City Council and the Public Works, Planning and Economic Development departments, to plan 30 stations in Denver for **transit-oriented development**. If we don't plan today, the opportunity will be lost forever. The crowning jewel will be the redevelopment of **Denver Union Station**.

At the same time, we have begun developing the City's first-ever **Strategic Transportation Plan** and launched the first update of our **zoning code** in nearly 50 years. These concurrent efforts are key to implementing the community vision embodied by **Blueprint Denver**, our guide to smart, sustainable growth.

Our tourism industry is an engine of that growth. Earlier this year, Denver commemorated the on-budget and ahead-of-schedule opening of our new **Colorado Convention Center**, and in December, we will celebrate the on-time and on-budget opening of the **Hyatt Convention Center Hotel**.

I am excited to announce – for the first time today – that the **2008 National Performing Arts Convention** will be held in Denver. This event brings together the directors and managers of the greatest opera, dance and theatre companies in the country. The convention's estimated economic impact is \$8 million, but the real value lies in bringing more than 5,000 arts professionals from around the country to Denver to see first-hand the dramatic changes in our cultural landscape. And what a treasure trove of accomplishments we will have to show them!

The stunning **Ellie Caulkins Opera House**, one of the world's finest facilities of its kind, will open this September in the renovated **Quigg Newton Auditorium**. With the Ellie, the new **Hamilton Building of the Denver Art Museum**, the eagerly anticipated **Museum of Contemporary Art** and **Clyfford Still Museum**, Denver will shine as an international cultural destination.

These projects demonstrate our commitment to quality urban design. To further that commitment, we are creating the **Mayor's Design Commission**, enabling the City to tap the wisdom of Denver's design community for guidance on city projects and major redevelopment opportunities. We are assembling **expert juries** to select signature architects for our new Justice Center. We also will launch the **Mayor's Design Awards** in October, celebrating quality design in small-scale projects throughout Denver's neighborhoods. Great cities are just as enriched by many small and beautifully designed projects as they are by large and bold civic gestures.

\* \* \*

Planning our vision of tomorrow requires the right fiscal choices today. **Fiscal responsibility** has been a top priority and constant focus for our administration. Thanks to the dedication of the City's workforce, we achieved a balanced budget after being faced with an anticipated \$70 million deficit in 2003, and \$35 million deficit last year. Throughout, we have maintained high bond ratings in spite of the lagging economy.

As a businessman, I support the basic premise of the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, or TABOR. It has played, and will continue to play, a valuable role in making our government more efficient and less wasteful. But just as any business must reinvest in order to grow, so too must our City and State reinvest in education and transportation, so that our children and grandchildren can have better jobs and greater opportunity than we have today.

That is why I stand here today to say that it is Denver's obligation to the rest of the state, and to ourselves, to support **Referendum C and Referendum D** on the fall ballot. And that is why the City intends to, once again, **de-Bruce** in November so that we too can

reinvest. In the last few years, uncompensated care at Denver Health has risen dramatically, our libraries are closed on days when our students and their parents need access, and other civic infrastructure continues to deteriorate.

\* \* \*

In this place where landscape and sky invite us to think big, we are surrounded by architectural triumphs. Yet in this place we are also reminded of one of our society's greatest failures. Like so many public spaces here and across the country, this park is a gathering place for many homeless in our community, making residents and tourists feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

Government alone, cannot solve this problem. But we can serve as a catalyst and convener.

Smarter and better government involves strategic investments that deliver maximum results for limited resources. That is the economic principle behind our **10-Year Plan to End Homelessness**.

The predominant face of homelessness may surprise you. Forty-six percent of Denver's homeless are employed, but their wages can't keep up with the cost of living. Forty-three percent of the people on Denver's streets are women with children. This issue involves people who are one paycheck away from losing a roof over their heads. And school children who have no "home" to go to after school.

Studies show net savings of \$12,000 to \$16,000 per year per person, when front-end resources are provided to the chronically homeless. Transitional housing, counseling and treatment services, and employment training decrease costly hospital stays, conserve police and court resources, and enable people to achieve self-sufficiency.

We presently spend roughly \$70 million a year on back-end services that are clearly not addressing the root problems of homelessness. Our plan to end homelessness will cost less than \$13 million annually, combining dramatic net savings with measurable results.

We have chosen a model that is both compassionate and results-oriented. Our plan balances the provision of housing, treatment services, and job training with the expectations of responsibility and self-reliance from those who receive the services.

This plan is not about hand-outs, coddling, or expanding the welfare system. It is about creating opportunity, about helping people regain control of their lives, so that we can all regain control of our community.

We learned just two days ago that Denver is receiving \$525,000 in new federal funds to assist homeless veterans. For that, I want to publicly thank **Phillip Mangano**, executive director of the United States Inter-Agency Council on Homelessness – who is with us here today. We are very fortunate that we were one of the first cities that Phillip

approached to encourage a proactive effort to ending homelessness. Since we began our work, 195 cities across America have created their own plans to end homelessness.

We are confident that the business and philanthropic communities will be tremendous partners in this effort, as will the faith-based communities.

Denver's **faith-based institutions** have a long history of charitable support for the less fortunate, but we must all do more. I challenge every church, synagogue, mosque, every place of worship to embrace at least one homeless family. Some have the capacity to do even more. With a short-term commitment of modest rental assistance and mentoring, I am confident that each congregation can connect these working, homeless families with the support services and confidence they need to permanently move from homelessness to self-sufficiency.

Together, this community can beat homelessness. Together, we must embrace a city where all families have homes, where everyone has the opportunity to be self-sufficient, where residents and tourists can walk our streets without being panhandled or frightened.

This vision must allow all people of goodwill to contribute to this effort. Today, we announce a new partnership among the City of Denver, Mile High United Way, and Metro Volunteers to provide local residents with a convenient connection to the numerous, meaningful volunteer opportunities that exist in our city. We will launch **VolunteerDenver.org** this summer, providing a searchable, citywide point-of-access to further stimulate volunteer participation in our already generous community. The site will be introduced with a "back-to-school" emphasis around education and children, with future action areas surrounding homelessness, parks and seniors to follow.

\* \* \*

No city can call itself great unless it ensures that all of its children can reach their full potential.

Last month, my Chief of Staff Michael Bennet became the new superintendent of Denver Public Schools. Like the rest of Denver, I am eager to work with Superintendent Bennet to transform DPS into the best urban school district in the country. The challenge belongs to all of us.

The City's ongoing partnerships focus around **early childhood education, after-school programming, and college access**. During last year's State of the City Address, I discussed the importance of ensuring that the promise of college is open to every student in Denver. In March, we launched the **CollegeInvest Mile-High GRADS program**, which provides up to \$1,500 in student loan forgiveness for Denver high school graduates. And today we announce that – thanks to Governor Bill Owens and the Colorado Commission for Higher Education – \$12 million from the state's CollegeInvest surplus has been earmarked specifically for need-based scholarships for Denver students.

With these state funds and other private sources, we have some \$20 million committed, which brings us more than two-thirds of the way toward creating a **needs-based endowment** that will ensure money is never the reason a Denver student can't attend college.

This fall we must pass **ProComp**, an innovative teacher compensation program that rewards teachers for raising student achievement, working in challenging schools, and continuing their professional development. I want to thank our teachers for their leadership in creating this opportunity. In November, when we make the choice to stand with our teachers on ProComp, we will put Denver at the national forefront of education reform.

\* \* \*

Cities are often defined by their lofty vision, but we will fail in our responsibility if we do not make the daily and consistent serving of our citizens a top priority.

Last year, we announced our intention to create a **3-1-1 customer service system**, which will allow citizens to dial one phone number to access any City service or information. At the moment, we are up to our elbows in the implementation of that system, and I am pleased to report that we are on schedule to phase in the service over the next year.

At the same time, we are working hard to bring this customer-oriented approach to all sectors of city government. The recent introduction of **electronic filing** in the Clerk and Recorder's Office, and Workforce Development's upcoming shift to a **demand-driven system** that focuses job training and services on the business community's needs – are just two examples.

In January we opened the **Denver Business Assistance Center** to provide a one-stop shop for small businesses to get help with licensing, permits and regulations. In its first six months of operation, the B-A-C assisted over 1,750 entrepreneurs with start-up information and resources.

For the past 19 months, we have engaged seven city agencies in a comprehensive review of our **development review and permitting processes**. Last week, we released a comprehensive report detailing the progress made to date and a concrete timeline and plan for going forward, making it more cost-efficient to do business in Denver.

We are also launching next month the new **Parks and People in Partnership Program**, providing local citizens an opportunity to participate in an ongoing park evaluation program, assisting us in rating the condition of parks across the city. The Parks and Recreation Department will host neighborhood workshops, training volunteers on what to look for when grading our amenities. We will eventually present public reports detailing the grades of individual parks and what remedies the City is undertaking.

\* \* \*

We will improve customer service and efficiency by working with our regional neighbors as well. From our seat here on Denver's front porch, it is clear to see that the future prosperity of Denver is linked to the prosperity of every single city, town, and county of Colorado.

Thanks to the leadership of **Glendale** Mayor Larry Harte, the cities of Denver and Glendale seized a cooperative opportunity to both save millions of dollars while providing enhanced services to our citizens by merging our **fire departments**.

The City of Denver partnered last year with the Colorado Housing Finance Authority and the Colorado Enterprise Fund to pursue our first-ever allocation of federal **New Markets Tax Credits** from the U.S. Department of Treasury. Along with Lakewood, Aurora, Commerce City and selected rural areas throughout the state, we ultimately received \$40 million in tax credits that will be used to support a comprehensive regional and statewide strategy to bring jobs and new development to distressed communities.

We are also proud to participate in an open space task force with our fellow Front Range counties, to help integrate Denver's vast 14,000-acre network of mountain parks into a coherent regional amenity. The newly established **Denver Mountain Parks Foundation** is raising private funds to help make repairs and capital improvements to these regional treasures.

\* \* \*

And while we gather in the heart of our urban park system today, we must recognize our obligation to expand the dream when Mayor Robert Speer first imagined this Civic Center nearly a century ago. We are grateful for the new **Civic Center Conservancy**, an energetic group of civic leaders, who embrace the dream of transforming this historic urban oasis into a dynamic public space.

I can assure you of one thing Mayor Speer never dreamed of – WI-FI. I am delighted to announce today that the Denver Newspaper Agency, whose new headquarters will border this park next fall, will provide the resources to make Civic Center park a **wireless internet hot spot**. We are grateful to the Denver Newspaper Agency for being among the first to invest in the vision of Civic Center park's future.

\* \* \*

As we gather here today, with two years behind us and two years ahead, our values and goals remain the same as they were on day one.

- \* Creating a community and city government that capitalizes on the strength of our diversity...
- \* Establishing opportunities for increased public involvement and civic engagement...
- \* Maintaining openness and transparency in our operations and decisions, and...
- \* Creating opportunities for all.

I am proud of what we have accomplished over the past two years, but what makes me proudest is that the residents of our diverse city came together time and again in good will and common purpose.

In the last two years, we have made a conscious and deliberate choice in this city to transcend the tiresome habits of polarization and blame that have stalemated American public life in other places. We must continue to celebrate the promise and possibility of the middle ground and pursue the common self-interest that we all share.

In the timeless words of Denver's first Poet Laureate, the late Lalo Delgado:

“Strength, strength...may we strengthen one another. Fuerza, fuerza...fortalezcamosnos uno a otro.”

The challenges and opportunities we face require us to think and act in ways that do not necessarily correspond with the duration of a fiscal year or an election cycle. We have the privilege – indeed, the obligation – to think beyond ourselves and beyond the immediate moment and to imagine the kind of sustainable city and community we want to pass on.

Let us envision Denver as a hub of opportunity: a place renowned for its superior schools, thriving economy, and vast philanthropic commitment.

Let us envision Denver as an example to the world of responsible management of resources: a place where public dollars go the farthest, natural resources are conserved, and growth enhances – rather than detracts from – quality of life.

Let us envision Denver as the Creative Capital of the West: a place renowned for its urban design, entrepreneurial spirit, and cultural vibrancy.

Let us envision a Denver as a model of regional cooperation: where success comes not at the expense of our neighbors, but adds to everyone's prosperity

We will not be bound by fate. The future is in our hands. Let's go back to work!

###