



# CITY OF COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

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OFFICE OF CITY MANAGER

## **2016 State of the City - Revised**

June 14, 2016

Dear Mayor, Members of the City Council, and Columbia Residents:

It is my honor and duty, as required by our home rule charter, to share this annual “State of the City” message with you. As Missouri’s fourth largest city, Columbia continues to provide an amazing quality of life for residents, balancing Midwest community values with many services and opportunities you would find in larger communities.

What really sets us apart, I believe, is how strongly we’re connected. As City Manager, I get to see a large part of what happens here and what so many of our friends, neighbors and partners are doing to make life better for everyone. They understand that what happens in one family...one block...one neighborhood...ripples throughout Columbia. Truly, we walk in each other’s shoes.

Because we’re connected, we acknowledge that the hope of a fine life in our city is more likely for some than for others. There are troubling financial, health and employment gaps between Columbia’s white families and black families. However, there is reason for hope. As I’ve said in the past, we only need to look around to see that Columbia has the resources to change its current reality, to assure that its high quality of life is open to all citizens.

This is the reasoning behind the City’s strategic plan for 2016 - 2019. We envision a Columbia that is the best place for *everyone*...not just some...to live, work, learn and play. It’s a community where people earn enough to support their families without asking for help. It’s a place where residents feel safe and secure, know their neighbors and like their neighborhoods. A Columbia where, regardless of where they live, families know they can rely on police and fire protection, utility services and well-maintained streets and transit systems. They choose to call Columbia “home” because life is good here.

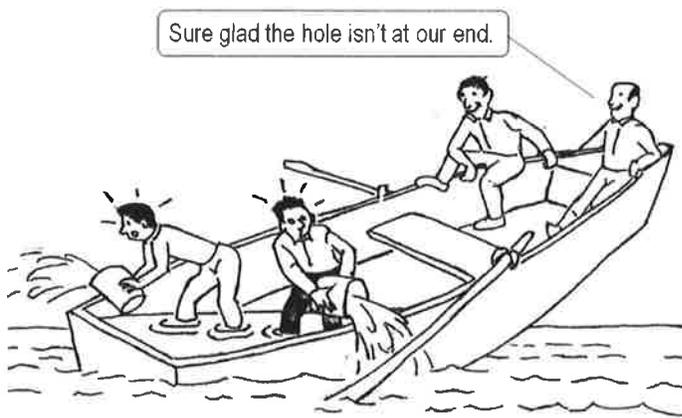
I want to honor and thank several local partners with long traditions of shrinking the gap in well-being for Columbia families. They connect to the City of Columbia through joint projects, funding relationships and shared services to residents.

- Through their poverty simulations, Central Missouri Community Action has awakened hundreds of people...including those in City government...to the persistent problem of poverty in Columbia.
- Heart of Missouri United Way believes that “...when we reach out a hand to one, we influence the condition of all.” Last year’s campaign raised close to \$3 million

to fund programs with long-term community impact, focusing on what it takes to help young people succeed.

- Columbia Public Schools' intense focus on graduating students is paying off. The graduation rate increased eight percent in just five years. The 18-year old who enters the workforce with a diploma or GED has a very good shot at getting out and staying out of poverty, and avoiding its side-effects of poor health, loss of connection to the community, and criminal behavior.
- Job Point has worked for decades to give folks a second chance (and sometimes a first chance) to get ready for work, learn marketable trades and build resumes. Their programs serve a wide range of persons with workplace challenges. In the last fiscal year, Job Point served 432 people, with those entering employment earning an average \$10.42/hour.
- Each year, the Columbia Housing Authority helps 1,900 families afford decent housing throughout the city. Working with Welcome Home, the Veterans Administration, Veterans United, Shelter Insurance and other local supporters, the Housing Authority created Patriot Place, a four-acre campus that includes apartments, and support services to help returning veterans reconnect to civilian life and get on their feet. The first residents moved in this past April.

The work of organizations like these truly benefits all of us, and that's sometimes hard to remember. Consider this cartoon. Because the organizations I mentioned above are the ones bailing the water, it can be pretty easy to sit on the dry side of the boat and not think much about the other end. Imagine how much better off we would all be, if the other two in the boat worked on patching the hull.



Sometimes our individual actions impact the whole community in unintended...but negative... ways. Let's say I wanted to buy a \$10 book on Amazon rather than from a locally owned bookstore. If I were to buy that same book locally, I would pay \$10.85 and \$0.20 of the extra \$0.85 cents comes to our community in the following ways:

Police and Fire	\$0.06	Parks	\$0.03
Streets and Sidewalks	\$0.03	Capital Projects (fire trucks, north police station, widening Nifong, etc.)	\$0.03
General Fund Departments (Health, Community Development, Finance and 11 others)	\$0.03	City Bus Service	\$0.01
Airport	\$0.01	TOTAL	\$0.20

This is another form of community impact, and not the good kind. When I buy that book online, I unintentionally de-fund some of the most important services I want from City government, like police and fire protection and well-maintained streets. My choice affects everyone who lives in Columbia. Citizens across America are caught in the same bind, watching local infrastructure erode. Congress could enact Marketplace Fairness legislation that would end the tax subsidy of Amazon and allow the State of Missouri to collect sales tax on internet transactions, but the issue has been pending in Washington for years.

The City Council's strategic plan is intended to address the gaps we see in Columbia. Council Members wisely used savings from the previous fiscal year to begin to walk this new path. The following list shows where we allocated the savings, and this message will update you on the progress we've made so far.

1. Veterans Welcome Home - \$500,000 for housing homeless veterans
2. Four net-zero affordable houses - \$200,000
3. Home-ownership program - \$100,000 for down-payment assistance
4. Cradle-to-Career - \$50,000 for early childhood learning
5. Focus group research - \$100,000 learn more about the disconnect between reality and perception of crime and growth and to accurately assess neighborhood needs
6. Airport terminal - \$500,000 reserved for new construction
7. Closed captioning - \$5,000 to improve access for persons with hearing disabilities
8. General Fund balance - \$178,494

## **Economy: Jobs that Support Families**

Our strategic direction for the economy includes: increasing the number of living wage jobs; reducing the wage gap between white and minority households; and reducing the skills gap in Columbia's workforce. While the "living wage" goal is a worthy aspiration, it's not subject to the City's direct influence. Our closest proxy is the well-established measure of 200% of the federal poverty level. Using this standard, a family of four would need \$48,600 in annual gross income to afford the basics, such as healthy food, decent shelter, utilities and health care.

*Featured Goal: Increase the number of people in Columbia with income above 200% of the Federal poverty level. From 2010 to 2014, 59.8% of people earned this level of income.*

### **What we see**

Two puzzling measures exist side-by-side in our local economy. Columbia's city-wide unemployment rate of around 3% is one of the lowest in the nation, but the number of families in poverty keeps growing. How can almost everyone who wants to work *be* working while the community gets poorer?

The answer to that question is that Columbia has many jobs that, even if you work full time, do not pay a living wage. The minimum wage has been ignored for so long by federal and state governments that it buys 30% less than it did in 1968.

We also know that black households bear the brunt of unemployment and poverty, even though poverty has grown for all groups. Our 2015 citizen survey confirms this. Sixty-four percent of white respondents said they were satisfied with local economic conditions, but only 53% of black respondents felt that way. Eighty-one percent of white respondents agreed that they earn a wage that allows them to meet basic needs, compared to 68% of black respondents.

There is only one way out of poverty, and that is a job that pays a living wage. Cultivating good jobs and preparing residents to qualify for those positions is our most important anti-poverty response.

### **What we've done**

Success has its roots in childhood. This year the City Council authorized \$50,000 to support the **Columbia Cradle to Career Alliance**, dedicated to ushering children and youth through education milestones to career readiness. This local coalition focuses on correcting disparities associated with race and income and assuring equal access to education opportunities. High school graduation is strongly linked to future success. Because the community continues to financially back Columbia Public Schools, graduation rates improved to 90% in 2014.

Since 1982, the **City's Career Awareness Related Experience (C.A.R.E.) program** has prepared at-risk youth, ages 14 - 20, for employment. In addition to paid, real-world experience, C.A.R.E. helps participants get job-ready, find a mentor, explore careers and manage their money. Last summer we paid the wages of 169 young folks who worked at 100 different public, business and not-for-profit work sites. Of that group, 160 (95%) completed the program and 42 (25%) were offered employment after the program ended. C.A.R.E. also runs programs during the school year and serves persons with developmental disabilities.

The **Mechatronics Certificate and Degree program**, offered at the Columbia campus of Moberly Area Community College (MACC), is a model for how a united partnership can lead to economic success. Launched in 2012 by MACC, the City's Economic Development Department, and a committee of local employers, Mechatronics provides trainees with hands-on experience in electrical systems, hydraulics, pneumatics and computer-controlled equipment. Enrollment has grown from six students in 2014 to 35 in 2016. Graduates are finding jobs at 3M, Kraft, JM Eagle and Boone Hospital Center with starting wages of \$16 per hour, and higher.

This year we launched the City's first real drive to **widen opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses**. Growing this sector expands economic well-being, increases consumer choice and creates an incentive to shop locally. As our contractor, Jim Whitt is encouraging current owners to consider bidding for purchases of their products and services. He's coaching aspiring owners and working with City staff to reduce bureaucratic barriers that put small firms at a competitive disadvantage. A "summit" connecting these businesses with state and local officials and large purchasers was standing-room-only.

#### **What lies ahead**

The power to reduce economic disparity requires long-term commitment. It's a goal that, for us, started three years ago and which is likely to continue well past 2019. We will **expand C.A.R.E. with apprenticeships** that offer program graduates two years of employment, mentoring and skill development in City jobs that don't require advanced degrees. We believe this is a great way to attract and develop local talent from neighborhoods where employment opportunities have not been consistently available.

**Columbia Regional Airport** is a quiet economic driver that supports at least 745 jobs and a \$27 million annual payroll...not a bad return on the City's \$2 million annual investment. The number of people flying from Columbia Regional is six times higher than it was in 2009, but with 120,000 users walking through the doors every year, the terminal is only half the size it should be. With combined local, state and federal investments, we can get even more return on the airport. On August 2, 2016 voters will have an opportunity to decide if they want to temporarily raise the City's hotel tax, paid by visitors, to help fund a new terminal that can

handle more flights, meet federal safety and security requirements and be totally accessible to persons with disabilities.

### **Social Equity: Improving the Odds for Success**

“Social equity” has so many meanings. It’s a big concept that inspires global or community action, a precise idea that moves us to be our brother’s or sister’s keeper and a lot more in-between. Guided by its strategic plan, the City will assess citizens’ ability to thrive...not just survive...in Columbia. We know there are disparities among neighborhoods, including the level of public investment and focused attention. At least initially, we will leverage City services and community partnerships in Columbia’s Central, North and East areas.

*Featured Goal: Increase the percentage of citizens who agree that Columbia is a place where they can thrive from 74% to 79% by December 31, 2018.*

#### **What we see**

Census data, maps of City service calls and City staff field observations reveal varying levels of stress and disparity...along with resources...in these neighborhoods. According to our most recent citizen survey, 74% of residents overall are satisfied that they can thrive in Columbia. While 78% of white residents hold this view, only 54% of black residents agree.

We’re betting that “thriving” is associated with several factors: safe and secure neighborhoods; stronger relations between neighbors; exercise, healthy eating and health care; and affordable housing and utilities. This is backed up by author Dan Buettner, who says it’s all about what we eat, how we exercise and our social networks, and by the Gallup-Healthways Index, which associates well-being with liking what you do and where you live, good health, economic security and supportive relationships.

#### **What we’ve done**

At the community level, City Council members co-hosted a **Race and Equity Forum**, which drew almost 100 people. Participants in this first session discussed how poverty and lack of cultural competence in schools can affect our kids’ achievement. With our community partners, we’re committed to being part of conversations that raise local awareness of race and equity.

On a personal level, and at her own expense, City Utilities staff member Carol Schafer reaches out to homeless persons, and her generous spirit inspires others. She gives **granola bars wrapped with information** about homeless shelters and support services to folks who look like they need help. So do her friends...and her colleagues...and local service organizations. She is a quiet leader and an individual force for good.

As a united force, City employees are engaging residents in the Central, North and East neighborhoods as never before. It's work from the heart. We're motivated by what we do to help people thrive and moved by what we learn. Here are some of the things we've done since January.

- Created a **Community Outreach Unit in the Police Department**. By assigning two officers to each of the three neighborhoods, we've established a consistent, trusted, focused presence for safety and security.
- **Connected neighbors** through more than 20 activities in these areas, including celebrations, clean-ups, public improvement meetings, service projects, planning sessions and family events.
- With the Ridgeway Neighborhood Association and other partners, developed a model **affordable housing plan** that also includes sidewalks, stormwater solutions, green space and safety features.
- Allocated more funds for first-time homebuyers and **affordable housing units** in the three neighborhoods and started work to set up a community land trust to stabilize housing prices.
- Studied residential energy use in the Derby Ridge area, let homeowners know about cost-savings potential and hosted an **energy efficiency** resource fair at the neighborhood school's parent-teacher night.
- With community partners, scheduled summer **lunch programs and weekly mobile food pantries** for kids and families.
- Started work with historically black church congregations to connect parishioners with **health insurance and health services**.

### What lies ahead

The City's approach to help the Central, North and East neighborhoods thrive is based on our known service delivery strengths, but are these services what residents truly want or need? Three individuals on special assignment will talk directly with residents, including those who have not welcomed contact with "the City" or those with whom we've had limited contact.

Glenn Cobbins and Judy Hubbard, with proven abilities to identify with, reach and inspire people, have already started **door-to-door conversations** in the Central neighborhood. They talk to students, older and disabled persons, black residents, persons with few resources, young people on the verge of high-risk decisions and those re-entering from the criminal justice system...people who seldom, if ever, contact City officials.

Carl Kenney, Jr. is an experienced neighborhood organizer, adjunct professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism and our contractor skilled in **building local decision-making structures**. His work in Durham, NC encouraged residents to take their futures into their own hands, leading to lasting change rather than one-off interventions. We'll

host the first meeting in the Central neighborhood in late June and move into the North and East neighborhoods over the coming months.

**Affordable housing investments** will continue to provide good returns to the community. New resources include \$500,000 to house homeless veterans at Veterans Welcome Home; \$200,000 to build four affordable, high-performance, energy-efficient homes; and \$100,000 in down-payment assistance for first-time homebuyers.

### **Public Safety: Safe Wherever you Live, Work, Learn or Play**

If Columbia is, in effect, two cities...where some families thrive and others don't...it also has two minds when it comes to public safety. Our crime rates are down. We'd have to double, triple and quadruple our crime rates to match those, respectively, in Springfield, Kansas City and St. Louis. Even as our crime rates drop, however, so has citizen satisfaction with many public safety services.

*Featured Goal: Increase the percentage of citizens who are satisfied with the overall quality of police services from 59% to 64% by 2019.*

#### **What we see**

##### *"Down" indicators*

- Locally, homicides fell from nine in 2000 to one last year. The property crime rate is half of what it was in the 1980s.
- Local satisfaction with the overall quality of public safety service, overall quality of police service and overall feeling of safety, all down compared to 2005.
- Nationally, 64% of Americans have a "great deal of respect for police" compared to 77% in 1967.
- General Fund revenue has not grown, limiting our ability to hire more police officers and firefighters.

##### *"Up" indicators*

- Americans' belief that crime is rising, according to annual Gallup polls, has increased nationally over the last decade, even as government data show that crime is falling.
- Influence from the non-stop local, state, national and global spread of crime news, comments and conversations.
- The demand for more officers, more prevention, and faster response.

In 2015, 54% of those responding to our annual survey said they were satisfied with their overall feeling of safety in Columbia, down from 67% in 2005. Over the last ten years, satisfaction with Police services has dropped 22%, from 81% to 59%. To understand this

loss of ground, even as crime rates have been falling over the last 30 years, we held anonymous citizen focus groups conducted by an independent consultant.

Most of the 19 participants reported positive contacts with and trust in Police officers. Few had been affected by crime directly, and many wished to see more officers in the community. Thirteen said that local media had influenced their perception of safety and acknowledged the effects of events in Ferguson, Mo. and “mass shootings across the country.”

*“For a city of this size, I feel like we’re heavily covered in the media, with three major networks and two newspapers. Because of this level of exposure, I’m sure the media has some influence on people’s perception of safety in the city.”*

*“The media always reports crimes, but they never provide any statistics. So there’s no real context to the report. Are these crimes isolated incidents, or is this a common problem?”*

National Gallup polls reveal similar findings. Last October Gallup said there had been an “uptick” in Americans’ perceptions of crime. This echoed Gallup’s 2011 report that Americans had a “highly negative outlook” on crime, even though crime statistics had steadily improved over the previous 15 years. “This unwarranted pessimism,” Gallup suggested, “may stem from the imperfect indications of crime that Americans receive from the news and other sources, as well as Americans’ overall mood.”

### **What we’ve done**

The Columbia Police Department’s new Community Outreach Unit (COU) is all about **officers connecting with citizens** in the Central, North and East neighborhoods, and our strategic timing couldn’t be better. Citizens helped choose and have welcomed their officers (two for each of the neighborhoods) as a stable influence. And CPD has the right mix of leaders, management and officers...with the right hearts and minds...for this work. This is not a “one-off” for them. They’re building for the future.

*“While on foot patrol in the Bodie / Currituck neighborhood, I was told by about six different citizens, at different locations, that they are glad to see the Police Department in their neighborhoods and glad we are interacting with kids. They said it’s comforting to look up and see a Police car parked and an officer talking with citizens in a non-crime incident manner.” Sgt. Michael P. Hestir, Supervisor, COU*

Sgt. Hestir and his COU officers are making positive contacts in their neighborhood visits and at special events. He says that citizens are “HIGHLY receptive to welcoming the Police back” and seeing Police interacting with citizens again. As cops and citizens of all ages connect, he’s seeing fewer “hard stares” and getting more handshakes and hugs.

*“When no one had the patience/time to help me this officer not only helped me but took me to Walmart and bought me a new car battery, etc.!!! Officer Jeff...I appreciate your help today and you were my hero.” Facebook post from driver stranded at I-70 and Highway 63 connector*

*“Many of them [CPD colleagues] would have found a way to help this young lady. She was supportive of me/us publicly, even with some personal attacks from her friends. She was courageous, more so than me that day.” Lt. Geoffrey Jones, Northeast Sector Commanding Officer and operationally responsible for the COU*

This connection between a citizen and CPD saved the driver's day. After stopping to check on the woman and her two small children, Lt. Jones jump-started her car...met her at Walmart...bought and installed a new battery...drove her to work when the car still wouldn't start...and assured her boss that the breakdown had happened.

Another busy street, another opportunity to connect, another personal story shared. Officer Williams responded to a call about a mother with small children walking along Clark Lane after midnight. While driving them home, he bought a meal for them and offered future rides, if needed. This is not the first time Officer Williams has purchased meals for people.

*“I was happy to have him come in with us to show people that there are good cops out there today...” Facebook post from mother helped by Officer Chris Williams*

So, Lt. Jones is right. **Our Police force is in the habit of helping.** I love it when citizens “catch” City employees doing something good and share their stories. As these go viral across social media, it confirms the public's power to counter negative information with the powerful true story of caring, courageous public service.

### **What lies ahead**

It's possible that both our Fire and Police Departments will become **accredited** in the coming year. This is the gold standard for a non-biased, external validation that we provide services using the best practices in the field today.

We're gradually **balancing community access to Police services** in the strategic areas. The Boone Community Center substation now serves Ward 1/Central neighborhood residents. Using part of the proceeds from the 2015 voter-approved capital improvement sales tax extension, we've purchased land in Ward 2, near Auburn Hills Parks, for a North side Police station. Ward 3/East neighborhood residents will connect with the Community Outreach Unit and other Police officers at a leased townhome near Indian Hills Park.

To **respond to changing call volumes**, CPD has adjusted officer schedules to cover calls more effectively. We've also added less costly civilian positions for CPD roles where police

powers are not needed. This returns sworn officers to the field while keeping costs manageable.

### **Infrastructure: Connecting the Community**

Transportation networks, utilities and parks are “big time” investments that knit Columbia together. They serve the public good but, as the community has grown and changed, aren’t serving all citizens equally well. No matter your neighborhood, you should be able to shop and find services either nearby or by using safe, convenient personal or public transit. In a city that treasures parks and trails, everyone should have green space within walking distance. Wherever you live, water, sewer, electric and stormwater systems should be safe and reliable.

*Featured Goal: Increase daily average ridership at the “bus stop” level by 5% in the Central, North and East neighborhoods by the end of 2016.*

#### **What we see**

The most faithful riders of COMO Connect (our City bus system) are lower-income persons, students, people with mobility challenges, folks who can’t or prefer not to drive, and those who value public transit’s ability to reduce auto emissions. COMO Connect riders travel to work, school, grocery stores, medical offices, events, meetings...all the places the rest of us reach by other means. Because of its potential to narrow the social equity gap, City Council members have focused a tremendous amount of attention on keeping bus travel affordable and making it more convenient. Changes made two years ago provided, for the first time, a real commuting option for the vast majority of workers and expanded bus service city-wide. In the three strategic neighborhoods an average nine riders per day, per bus stop, use City buses. That’s less than the average 27 riders per day, per stop, across all of Columbia.

The City’s “complete street” policy, adopted in 2004, describes our goal for Columbia’s transportation network. All neighborhoods should have access to equal infrastructure like sidewalks, crosswalks, stormwater systems, curbs, streetlights and good streets, themselves. All citizens should have safe passage on foot, by car, bike, wheelchair or other forms of transportation. The fact is that many neighborhoods were developed without much of the infrastructure that today seems standard. Narrowing this investment gap...like increasing bus ridership...can help residents in those areas connect to opportunities throughout the community.

Natural areas represent some of the best examples of our original landscape, places where you can still see plants, animals and other features present before the area was settled. As noted in *Our Natural Legacy*, a City-County plan to add green space, “...a connection to the natural world is fundamental to human health and well-being...”. In a local 2015 survey, 68%

of participants said they favored acquiring land to preserve open space and protect the environment. Last November, by a wide margin, voters approved extending the park sales tax and using part of that revenue to add more natural areas to the City's current 1,416-acre inventory.

### **What we've done**

To **introduce more residents to COMO Connect**, Community Outreach Unit officers and Central Missouri Community Action are distributing bus passes in the Central, North and East neighborhoods. Whether the passes are good for one ride, one month or a whole year, they create positive community connections. We've also installed concrete for new shelters on Conley Road at the Staples entrance; on Forum Boulevard near Nifong; and on Worley Street near Woodlawn.

The City Council quickly approved, at the request of North neighborhood residents, more **street lighting near Auburn Hills Park**. We've built **new sidewalks in the Central neighborhood** on Garth Avenue near OAK Towers. The project includes sidewalks on the east side of the street, six driveways to meet ADA requirements, and a crosswalk across the east leg of the Garth and Worley intersection. When all the work is done, persons using wheelchairs and scooters will have a safe and accessible route to Worley without having to cross Garth to use sidewalks on the west side of the street.

In addition to the Flat Branch relief sewer projects and the \$14 million we're spending to reline those sewers we will not replace, we continue to **remedy flooding in the First Ward**. The community has supported ballot issues for sewer and storm water improvements in the past year. Our test results show that sewer-lining efforts are paying good dividends. We will report those results to Council Members very soon. In the meantime, I can tell you that we have significantly less rain water getting into our sewers and that replacing 100 year-old brick-and-mortar sewers with PVC pipe along Flat Branch Creek is well underway.

We closed on the acquisition of Gates Park, a **60-acre natural area** near High Point Lane and Route K, in mid-May. This increases our total inventory of protected areas from 1,292 to 1,352 acres. The purchase will preserve green space, protect the Little Bonne Femme Creek and provide access to the future Little Bonne Femme Trail.

### **What lies ahead**

Olsson Associates will analyze how changes in our bus system have affected the community and other transit stakeholders and prepare recommendations for the future of COMO Connect. We expect to increase the number of accessible bus shelters as federal funds that have been backed up since 2013 are released for projects. By the end of FY 2016, we plan to increase average daily ridership to 177 in the Central neighborhood; 41 in the North neighborhood; and 46 in the East neighborhood.

To assure that City capital investments reflect community values and needs, we offer citizens many opportunities to get involved in decision-making. City staff will make special connections with residents in the Central, North and East neighborhoods to learn what projects mean the most to them. Assuming funds are available, we will budget and schedule improvements to carry out neighborhood desires.

With the 60-acre Gates Park addition, we're on track to increase natural areas from 1,292 to 1,352 acres by 2021. We'll work with the Greenbelt Land Trust to inventory natural resources and wildlife on existing City-owned properties and evaluate other sites within the City limits that may be good candidates for purchase and protection of land and wildlife habitat. The Parks and Recreation Department will continue its excellent work to assure good opportunities for outdoor activities and exercise in all neighborhoods.

### **Operational Excellence: High-Level Service from Engaged Employees**

City employees are a 1,450-person force for good. In strategic terms, they are our greatest strength and creative heart. They are work colleagues connected to each other and are intimately connected to the community through friendships, their business patronage, the organizations they support and all the things they do as parents and family members. I am intensely proud of their commitment to serving all citizens and to putting special care into the Central, North and East neighborhoods over the next three years.

*Featured Goal: Increase employee engagement from 72% to 75% by 2019.*

#### **What we see**

At 72%, City employees are more than twice as engaged as the national average reported by the Gallup organization. In its most recent survey, pollsters found that only 34% of American workers say they are engaged in their workplaces, and that's the highest level since Gallup started tracking this indicator. Worldwide employee engagement is not much different and, in most countries, is slightly lower. City employee engagement is linked to a strong public service calling, something that comes from inside. Stoking this fire in our entire workforce will improve our performance and create lasting public benefits.

High engagement affects interest in staying with an employer. At just over 11% last year, our low turnover is the envy of many industries.

Forty-nine percent of those responding to our most recent citizen survey agreed that City government values diversity. Agreement was 51% for white survey participants and 32% for those who were black. The City of Columbia attempts to foster a work family that is as representative of our community as possible. "Diversity" means opening all doors to people of different races, generations, genders and backgrounds. "Inclusion" means creating a work

environment where all employees...not just some...can thrive (there's that word again). Some of our work units are both diverse and inclusive, providing hubs for friendships, trust, professional growth and advancement, but there are gaps in the organization and in community perception.

Overall citizen satisfaction with the quality of City employee customer service has hovered in the low 70% range for several years, beating regional and national benchmarks by almost 20%. Since 2007, agreement that it's easy to reach the right person at City Hall, has increased from 47% to 62%. These are good service ratings that still offer opportunities for improvement.

### **What we've done**

**Thoughtful, top-notch supervisors** can deepen employee engagement. Our City University learning center develops these leaders through LADDERS training for employees who aspire to this role. Since we launched LADDERS two years ago, 14 of the 182 program participants have been promoted into supervisory positions. City U's STAR program, to date, has engaged 238 supervisors with initial and continuing training and special attention to coaching, active listening and goal-setting skills. Each City employee has at least one career goal that connects to strategic priorities.

Reaching for excellence through **accreditation** puts your reputation on the line. This stamp of approval from an independent, unbiased national organization is the highest praise that local government services can receive. Originally recognized for excellence in 2001, our Public Works Department has been accredited longer than any other Missouri city. Other accredited departments and divisions include the City's water, sewer, stormwater and solid waste utilities; Community Development; Parks and Recreation; Convention and Visitors Bureau; and most recently, the Columbia/Boone County Department of Health and Human Services.

We see the need to join other local leaders in **recognizing and eliminating institutional biases** we might have based on race, disability and other perceptions that can separate us as human beings. Our Health and Human Services Department is coordinating learning opportunities for City employees through partnerships with the National Conference for Community and Justice and the Diversity Awareness Partnership. Last December, 140 managers and supervisors attended a one-hour class on diversity and inclusion and 15 employees participated in Building Inclusive Communities workshops. By the end of FY 2016, we expect to have six certified, in-house "facilitators" available to offer basic and advanced courses to another 143 employees. We also expect that all sworn Columbia Police officers will complete training relating to racial profiling and fair and impartial policing.

Over the last two years, our **customer contact center** has reduced the number of possible phone numbers you might call to reach us by more than half. We had 154 numbers. Now there are 70. We see a future where, unless there's an emergency or need for a Text Telephone, there's only one number to call. Because we've developed the center in manageable steps and hired people with a passion to help others, we're getting rave reviews from customers. They love not getting transferred from office to office when they call. They love getting the right answer to their question, and they love seeing the potholes filled within just a few days of their call.

### **What lies ahead**

In the coming year we will focus on accrediting the Police and Fire departments. At Mayor Treece's request, we will accelerate the full launch of the contact center. We're preparing a public announcement and branding effort and disconnecting excess phone numbers as we reach full implementation.

### **Finally**

This 2016 State of the City message is an overview of the efforts of your city staff to implement the City Council's most important goals. I am proud of what they have done in eight short months, on a very small budget, made up of last year's savings. There are financial storm clouds ahead with relatively severe implications for Columbia. With that context, we aspire for steady, if perhaps slow, progress in the coming year.

Regards,



Mike Matthes  
City Manager