



Eddie A. Perez
Mayor

TO: Court of Common Council and the Residents of the City of Hartford
FROM: Eddie A. Perez, Mayor
DATE: March 12, 2007
RE: State of the City Address 2007

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

President Bazzano, members of the Court of Common Council, and most importantly, the residents of Hartford, it brings me great pride to report to you that Hartford is safer, more financially stable, and more vibrant now than it has been--- not just in years, but in decades.

Together, we proved the doubters wrong. Together we can say, "Si Se Puede!" That means "Yes We Can!" And Hartford, together, yes we will!

Gone is the year 1994 when there were 55 homicides and the Hartford Courant headline read, "Gangs and Drugs Combine for a Deadly Year in City." Gone is the year 2000 when Governing Magazine called Hartford "Rudderless."

Tonight--- March 12th, 2007--- I am here to deliver a new headline: The time of decline is over. Hartford is on the rise and on the brink of great things! With your help, and with your faith, that news will soon be the norm. So, I say again, Si Se Puede. Yes we can. And yes we will. And together, we will be even better.

There are so many encouraging stories to tell. In 2006, we promoted a "Son of Hartford" to Police Chief. Under the leadership of Daryl Roberts, serious crime is down in every neighborhood. We had almost 600 fewer serious crimes committed in the City of Hartford last year than in 2005. In fact, 2006 was one of the safest years in Hartford in 25 years.

But together we can do better. We know from experience that police work best when they are not just prominent in the community but part of it. That's why in the budget I will present to you this spring, I'm proposing 80 more police officers to patrol the streets this year. You'll see more of them walking the beat, riding bicycles and even riding horseback. Yes, we want to bring back the horse division. We're also breaking ground

this spring on the new Public Safety Complex. All of this will make our officers more visible, more accessible and more effective.

By adding 80 more officers, we will exceed my goal of a force that is 500 strong. And we will do even more to leverage this city's most powerful crime-fighting tool--- its people. Neighborhood policing needs neighbors to succeed. So this progress is your progress.

I am also pushing for tougher and more responsible gun laws. I strongly support action on the state level by Connecticut Against Gun Violence, but the fact is Hartford can't wait. I will propose an ordinance requiring Hartford residents to report lost or stolen firearms within 72 hours. This ordinance will also enable our Corporation Counsel to sue anyone, anywhere who failed to report a lost or stolen weapon that was used in a felony in our city. The people of Hartford spend millions of dollars on fighting gun crime and paying for its consequences and many of these weapons come from out of town. It's time the people who buy these guns are held accountable.

I can't say it enough: the shootings and the killings all across our state must stop. I'm working with Mayors nationwide to find creative ways to stop the flow of illegal guns across state lines. Hartford Police retrieved 500 illegal guns last year. We need to stop these weapons from coming here in the first place. Again I say, Si Se Puede! Yes we can! And working together, yes we will.

To win this fight, we need to be tough, but we also need to be smart. We have to crack down on the supply of illegal guns, but we also have to reduce the causes of violence.

One important way to do that is to work with people who have paid their debt to society so that they can return to the community as productive citizens. With that in mind, this year, I will be forming a task force to study how Hartford can learn from the successes of other cities and states in this area, and do a better job of reintegrating people once they leave the criminal justice system.

Another important way to fight crime is to help our young people make good choices in the first place. We need to offer them the hope of something better than guns and drugs. That's why I created the Office for Youth Services, led by Enid Rey. In the budget I am proposing, I want to invest almost \$2 million dollars in our kids. This would fund:

1. Academic enrichment and after school activities
2. A coordinated community effort to address youth violence
3. And provide 1600 summer and year-round jobs for Hartford teens.

Our kids need unconditional support. Parents, clergy, and teachers, you know that means tough love. You stood with me in the pews last summer during our Volunteers of Faith tour. Stand with our kids now!

Our best long-term investment is our children and Hartford's future demands a good education for all students. I am proud of the progress we have made toward that goal, by

emphasizing standards and accountability, by investing in success, and most importantly, by putting kids first. But I also know that together, we can do so much better.

We hired a nationally recognized educator as our new Superintendent. Dr. Steven Adamowski understands the challenges of urban education. He has a proven track record of increasing student achievement in the classroom and raising the expectations of earning a four-year college degree. Dr. Adamowski and I firmly believe that Hartford students can and will compete for the jobs of the 21st Century! Si Se Puede! Yes we can.

All of us--- students, parents, and teachers--- are proud of the new mandatory school uniform policy for grades Pre-K through 8. The uniform policy eliminates distractions and increases learning. As Chairman of the Board of Education, I look forward to working with parents, educators, board members and students alike to find the most cohesive way to expand the policy to the high schools.

Our kids deserve not only great teachers and administrators--- they deserve the best educational environment. To date, we have invested \$360 million to complete seven schools. Now phase two is underway. We are spending more than \$232 million toward six more schools. These schools will increase parental choice. A more rigorous curriculum in all Hartford Schools will make every one of them a school of choice when it comes to quality. We're striving to make a Hartford education second to none.

Excellence in education leads to a college degree. We're working to reach our goal of having 25 percent more Hartford students graduate from college by 2009. To get there, we have a lot of work to do, but it is crucial that our young people are empowered with a quality education so that they can reinvest their skills into their community. Our kids deserve this chance.

One of the most important learning tools of today is the computer. Thanks to the "Wireless Hartford" pilot project in the Blue Hills and Downtown neighborhoods, we are closing "the digital divide" one block at a time.

Thanks to this initiative, 219 more residents now have low-cost computers and have received basic computer training. 2500 new users have logged on to "Wireless Hartford" to get information regarding education, jobs and health care. I'm proud of this program because it connects families to each other as well as to information.

"Wireless Hartford" is not just for computer geeks. It is a long-term solution to learning, communicating and spurring economic growth. Hartford now has one of the largest Wireless Broadband Networks in the country!

You can get more information about Wireless Hartford or any non-emergency city service by dialing three simple numbers: 3-1-1. As promised last year, the 3-1-1 Call Center is open for business. And business is booming! Already, our Constituent Service Representatives handle about 400 calls a day making city services more effective and efficient for you.

The positive responses to this program are pouring into my office. Joe Langlais, from Parkville, is a frequent caller. On one occasion, he informed 3-1-1 of some bulky waste on his street and within three hours it was picked up. Under the old system, that bulky waste would have sat there for a week!

Some people are surprised government can work like this. I'm not. That's my job. I knew that we could do it--- by pushing for new solutions and pulling in the same direction. I say it again: Si Se Puede! Yes we can! And together, we will be even better.

Despite what you may hear, Hartford's glass is half full. We are on the right track when it comes to bringing more high-paying jobs back to the "Insurance City." Travelers, Aetna, and Prudential are adding almost 5,000 jobs in Hartford in the next three years. This is a vote of confidence in Hartford's future by the corporate community.

But it's not just the big companies that add jobs small businesses are doing their fair share. Since 2002, Hartford's entrepreneurs have created 700 new jobs. However, in my daily neighborhood visits, I hear you when you say, "Mayor, I need a job now." And we are delivering. The construction and renovation of our schools have provided tremendous employment opportunities and also skills that will last a lifetime. Unemployment in Hartford has dropped four years in a row, and we have helped by putting residents to work on our school construction projects.

Minority-Women Business Enterprises have benefited greatly from the school construction program. The investment has meant 319,000 hours of labor and \$8 million in wages for Hartford residents. My friends, I invite you to take a look at how far we've come in such a short period of time. Si Se Puede! Yes we can! And together, we will be even better.

We're not just building schools. Since 2002, we've built 2100 new units of housing—with prices ranging from affordable to luxury.

1. 34 units at Garden and Risley;
2. 73 units at the new Dutch Point;
3. 23 single-family homes at Alden and Wethersfield;
4. And 74 units on Zion Street--- to name a few.

As you might have read in the Hartford Courant, Hartford isn't just building homes it's leading the region! While many communities are experiencing a drop in housing permits, Hartford has jumped 131 percent over the past two years. Now, that's rolling out the welcome mat!

This increase in residential living will help put more feet on the street, creating a more vibrant city and a more attractive destination to employers and workers alike. Just as importantly, for people who already live here, it will expand the opportunities for home-ownership. So far, we have helped 1350 residents make the transition from renting to

owning. One example is Hartford Firefighter Tony Milledge who is a proud new homeowner in the Clay Arsenal neighborhood.

The heart of Hartford is our neighborhoods--- and the people who bring them alive and lift them up. Sadly, this past year, we lost four champions: Ella Little Cromwell, Father Jose da Silva, Jackie McLean, and Willie Pep. They showed us how to use our voices and our votes, be courageous in a new country, create beautiful music, and stand up for the little guy. In their memory, there is now Ella L. Cromwell Way, Father da Silva and Jackie McLean will have streets dedicated in their honor and I have proposed Willie Pep Park as part of the new Front Street Development Project.

While these greats are watching over us from above, there's a lot more work to do here on the ground to honor their spirit and strengthen our communities. That is the goal of my Strong Neighborhoods Agenda.

Let's clean up our streets by getting rid of blighted buildings! Since I became Mayor, there's been a 55 percent reduction in the number of blighted buildings. Tonight, I am announcing the Hartford Neighborhood Development Fund. This will target the development of new moderate and affordable housing units in areas of the city where, for all of our progress, success has eluded us.

With Council's support, I am proposing that we provide up to \$50 million in capital funds through the Hartford Neighborhood Development Fund, over the next five years to leverage at least another \$100 million in private and public investment in creating new homeowners, providing quality moderate income rental units and development new neighborhood retail. Let's begin the next phase of Hartford's unprecedented renaissance.

Hartford 2010 is a blueprint for that next big step. It's a joint effort between the Metro Hartford Alliance and the City to identify areas to grow business. Residents and business leaders alike were part of the selection process. I want Hartford to grow jobs for the next 30 years, not just the next 10.

People need to get to these jobs and I want to make transportation more convenient. Getting around town and around the region is crucial. We're making \$36 million in substantial improvements along some of our major arteries:

1. North Main Street
2. Maple Avenue
3. Park Street
4. Albany Avenue
5. Blue Hills Avenue starts this spring.

Smart transportation is smart growth. Residents need to get to jobs and visitors need easy access to their destinations. That's why I've asked Congress for \$1.5 million--- to utilize Bradley International Airport and make Hartford the region's transportation hub. I also strongly support the Governor's plan to include quality, reliable rail service connecting Hartford to Springfield and New Haven.

Hartford is becoming a tourist destination. We are the “Insurance City” but we are fast becoming an “Arts Mecca” too. That’s something to brag about--- and to build on.

In the past two years, 81 restaurants and cafes have opened. Last year, we attracted 240,000 new visitors to the city. Together, we can do even better.

Let’s show people that Hartford is open for business. That’s why I strongly support a new, multipurpose arena to generate jobs, attract more visitors, stimulate the economy, and keep the momentum going!

We all have a reason to celebrate our success as one community and one Hartford. This isn’t the job of one person or one administration or one party. Our government and our city are thriving because we came together as a community and focused on results. Four years ago, the voters approved a new charter and a new course for Hartford. That change has enabled us to move boldly on issues like education, public safety, and economic development to find common solutions to our common problems.

That being said, I also believe it makes sense to see how these reforms have worked and how they can be improved. That is why, in consultation with Council, I will appoint a Citizens Task Force before the end of the year. Members will review the impact of the charter changes and will recommend to newly elected Mayor and Council whether and when a Charter Revision Commission should be convened to make adjustments.

Government works best when it listens and Hartford I hear you. A good government is by the people and for the people and the people recognized tonight are just a few who are making better things happen for all of us. We have come this far because you joined me in believing in a brighter future--- and not accepting the status quo.

Remember, Si Se Puede! Yes, we can and Hartford, yes we will. Working together, our future will be even better.

Thank you and God Bless the City of Hartford.