



**Eddie A. Perez**  
**Mayor**

**TO: Court of Common Council and the Citizens of the City of Hartford**  
**FROM: Mayor Eddie A. Perez**  
**DATE: March 13, 2006**  
**RE: State of the City Address 2006**

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 Citizens of Hartford, it is my pleasure to come before you tonight and tell you that the state of our city is the strongest it has been in decades. And together, we can make it safer and even more vibrant because “Hartford’s People Have the Power” to make our best days yet to come--- and they will come soon.

Last year, I told you how we must be “One Hartford.” I’m proud to say that together, we have made tremendous strides towards closing the gap between “the haves and the have nots.”

1. We are raising the bar on education and providing more choices for families so more of our children can graduate from college
2. We are building more homes and increasing homeownership opportunities for residents in every income bracket and in every neighborhood
3. We are welcoming new neighborhood businesses and creating new jobs
4. And we are the third most improved city in the nation for fighting crime--- working harder every day for a safer tomorrow.

It takes all of us to believe that “Hartford’s People Have the Power”--- to unite, to lead, and to move forward.

I’d like to take a moment and recognize a symbol of the power to heal, my wife Maria. My bride of 28-years is a tower of strength. Thanks to modern medicine, a lot of prayer, the love of family and friends, and the support of the residents of this great city, she continues to overcome her health challenges.

Under my leadership, and with your continuous support, we have accomplished a lot in one short year. Tonight, I will outline those achievements, and layout some ambitious plans designed to inspire all of us to help Hartford move ahead by shaking off the dust from the past and forging full-steam ahead into the future. We'll do that by celebrating our diversity and embracing a progressive attitude towards growth.

Remember, "Hartford's People Have the Power" to succeed by taking decisive action together. Let's look at what we have achieved starting with your safety:

1. A 12-percent reduction in serious crime
2. 1559 fewer serious crimes
3. One of the lowest crime rates since the 1980's.

You won't hear it in the media that:

1. The murder rate is one of the lowest in recent years
2. The number of shooting victims has not increased
3. Most of the crimes involved people who knew each other.

Now, let me be clear. Trying to settle an argument with a gun is never acceptable in this city. I've said time and again that one death is too many. The violence must stop and it must stop now. But to make this happen, all of us must take responsibility.

The average age of people involved in crimes in Hartford last year was 28. In order to prevent our children from going down the wrong path, we need to intervene early and effectively.

All of us have the responsibility to provide that positive path. Parents, do you remember the old public service announcement "Do You Know Where Your Kids Are?" Well, do you? Adults matter. Families are the front line of defense when it comes to talking to youngsters and keeping an eye on them.

Communities matter. They must help provide safe havens for our youngest citizens who need healthy and creative activities to keep them positively engaged. Our teenagers need recreational and educational outlets. And our young adults need job training and year-round employment.

Business leaders must do their part too. You can take a Hartford kid under your wing and show them the ropes of how to succeed in the business of life. Become a role model. You can also provide valuable job experience, networking skills, and help build that inner confidence that lays the foundation for the leaders of tomorrow.

Our clergy needs to be equally engaged. Let's use the power of the pulpit to inspire positive change, to reinforce hope, and to say rest assured, Hartford is a place to live, work, play--- and worship--- each and every day.

As Mayor, I must lead. With the help of City Council, I have increased the number of police officers to 440--- a 40-percent increase since I took office. On top of that, a new class of recruits is slated to start this summer.

The Neighborhood Policing Plan is a year old and already it is building trust with the community and getting violent criminals off our streets. Here's a perfect example: Officers Gabriel Laureano and Matthew Labbe's investigation of a suspicious vehicle led to two arrests and the seizure of a .25 caliber Boa/Sundance Semi-automatic pistol with a scratched out serial number.

That's the kind of success we're experiencing on the local level. Here's how we need to work together to get the State to do its fair share:

1. We need tougher laws to get illegal guns off the streets
2. People must report lost and stolen guns
3. The State must shift more money into preventing crimes from happening in the first place. Let's put more money into recreation and summer jobs not into locking up our kids
4. The State must do a better job at supervising people on parole and probation
5. The State needs to give more money to cities and towns to hire more cops.

Locking-up criminals is only part of the law enforcement equation. Another is helping ex-convicts re-enter society successfully. I'm happy to report that I was able to secure over a million dollars in federal and state funding to help more than 250 people complete their personal journey from prison to productive neighborhood resident. We're helping to support their needs through housing, mentoring and job placement.

Jobs! They are the key to opening the door to opportunity. "Hartford's People Have the Power" to support small businesses, creating jobs to help jumpstart economic activity in our neighborhoods. The new Save-A-Lot grocery store in the Clay Arsenal neighborhood is a great example. Public Housing residents like Lucinda Thomas and the Hartford Tenants Rights Federation led the crusade. Thank you for your grass-roots effort that brought 50 much-needed jobs to the area. I was happy to put them to work right away as the store's first customer.

In order to continue to nurture small businesses and local employment, I have proposed State Legislation that gives tax breaks to small businesses that employ Hartford residents. This is my second year trying to get the bill passed. The General Assembly needs to act on this bill and act now!

When it comes to keeping high paying insurance and finance jobs in the City, remember, "Hartford Means Business." At the end of last year, I held an economic summit with local corporate leaders. I want to thank them and the State Democratic Leadership for joining me in a renewed sense of urgency to retain and, more importantly, grow these jobs in Hartford.

How do I define a “renewed sense of urgency?” We have lost thousands and thousands of jobs in the past because of mergers and acquisitions. If this pace keeps up, the economic impact on the State--- not just the City of Hartford--- will be worse than if the Groton Sub Base had closed. We saved the base, now let’s save the Insurance City!

Finance and Insurance are just some of the best jobs in Hartford. Others are in the fields of medicine, government, the arts, and education. Most of these jobs require advanced computer skills. Last year, I told you about how most suburban children have computers at school and at home. However, less than a third of Hartford households are connected to the Internet. “Hartford’s People Have the Power” to close the “digital divide.”

This summer we will take a dramatic step in that direction. The Blue Hills and Downtown neighborhoods are scheduled to go wireless. Whether students or workers need to search for jobs, register for classes, review health care information, or learn more about government, Hartford residents will be able to click and connect to the information superhighway from anywhere in their neighborhood, whether it be at their home, school, library, or park.

Our goal is to provide this free access to all of our citizens within the next two years as well as provide low-cost computer equipment and basic computer courses.

Gaining these high-tech skills is just one way we must prepare our young people with a solid educational foundation so that they can compete for the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Let us not forget that education starts at birth. As promised, I created the Office for Young Children. It is now open for business. There is a comprehensive plan to serve our youngest residents, ages zero to eight, so that they have the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. This includes education, health, parental support systems, and quality daycare.

The goal is to prepare our children now, for a better tomorrow. However, for the students already in our classrooms, the future is now.

Education equals empowerment. Take a look at the Naylor School in the South End. There are new classrooms, new science labs, and new cafeterias. Hartford kids are the scientists, teachers and business leaders of tomorrow who are getting a new, positive learning environment today in our Capital City. \$300 million has been invested so far in school construction and renovation. By May, three more schools will be getting ready for their makeovers in the Blue Hills, Sheldon-Charter Oak, and Asylum Hill neighborhoods.

The learning environment is more inviting and the public school curriculum is stronger and more inspiring. There are more college preparatory courses and more national recognition of our efforts and improvements.

Soon, Hartford could be home to a third Blue Ribbon School. Hartford Magnet Middle School has been nominated. Last year, Dwight Elementary received this honor.

Simpson-Waverly was the first Hartford school to achieve this status back in 2003. I'd like to congratulate Principals and former Principals Delores Bolton, Cecilia Green, Kathy Greider, Stacey McCann, James Thompson and Sheila Way for empowering our youngsters.

To get this kind of recognition, it takes a team effort and it starts at the top. I'd like to take a moment and thank our outgoing Superintendent Robert Henry for his leadership and commitment to the students of Hartford. Bob, we wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors.

Speaking of accolades, Hartford Magazine named The Greater Hartford Classical Magnet and Sports and Medical Science Academy as two of the top 20 high schools in the region. Now Principals Timothy Sullivan and Eduardo Genao have even more bragging rights!

Hartford Magnet Schools are a symbol of high standards and tough competition. Urban and suburban families are eager for their children to take part in the system. For every one space available, there are three applicants.

Another way to increase educational opportunities is my Private School Initiative. I reached out to 19 Independent Schools in the state, which are some of the best in the world. These schools have committed almost 12 million dollars to provide Hartford kids with a priceless opportunity and expose them to real life circumstances and challenges.

As you can see, when kids are given the right kind of support and opportunities, they perform and they perform well. I believe in Hartford and I believe in our kids. That's why I became the Chairman of the Board of Education. The future of our children must come first. Under my leadership, the Board will demand higher expectations for both academics and behavior, address the issue of school uniforms, and increase the number of students who graduate from college.

From educational initiatives to community initiatives, "Hartford's People Have the Power" to improve the quality of life for all of our families, friends, and neighbors.

27,000 Hartford residents do not have healthcare. This is now changing. A few months ago, my Healthy Communities Initiative was awarded nearly one million dollars in federal funding. As we speak, our seniors, our children, and our families are being connected to a medical home and services they need. This grant is creating a system that links hospitals and neighborhood clinics and provides bilingual assistance so we can better refer, track and monitor patients.

No longer should families be forced to choose between medical care and paying rent. No longer will the sick lose precious time repeating the same information to different health providers. Mark your calendars. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, my program will receive its official roll out.

Cutting down on the wait will not just apply to health care. 2006 is the Year of Customer Service. Streamlining requests is essential for good government. So, here's the 4-1-1 on the 3-1-1 System set to start this summer:

1. Call if you have a non-emergency question or request for service
2. Trained personnel at the 3-1-1 Call Center will handle your case
3. 99-percent of the time, you'll get an answer without being transferred to another line
4. This program cuts down on duplication of requests between departments
5. This will save the City millions of dollars and create greater efficiency
6. This will help managers more accurately evaluate performance levels of our employees.

Example: We don't need multiple requests to fill a pothole. We just need to fill it quickly and properly.

Improving city services and accountability comes at a good time. More people are moving to Hartford and the Capital City is getting more national attention. The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Wall Street Journal, and USA Today all have put the spotlight on Hartford for our vibrant neighborhoods, affordable housing, and convenient location to jobs and cultural events.

The numbers don't lie:

1. There are more than 1100 new homeowners in the Capital City since 2002
2. There are 36 housing development plans completed, in the works, or on the drawing board that translates to about 3,000 new units
3. From luxury condos to a new definition of public housing, there are homes for every income level in Hartford and in every Hartford neighborhood.

We're not just building homes we're building our future. Every time I cut a ribbon for a new business, whether it is in the Northeast, Parkville, Clay Arsenal, Frog Hollow, the South End or the West End, I say this is a great day for Hartford, because it is.

And have you taken a look at our skyline lately? The apartments at Hartford 21 open this summer. The Connecticut Convention Center and the Marriott Downtown Hotel started welcoming visitors last year. All of these buildings are making photographers go "snap happy" with our new look and our new attitude.

This is just the beginning. The new Connecticut Center for Science and Exploration is coming in 2008--- another reason for people from near and far to explore the wonders of Hartford.

And let's face it. Hartford is ready for even more excitement. Concerts, conventions, and college hoops are great. The Wolf Pack is wonderful. But when your city is named the third best place in the nation to add a pro sports team, you want to build on your solid entertainment foundation.

I don't know about you, but I want Puckey the Whale to return to Hartford! You know the Whalers theme music--- you can hum it as I leave you with this one final thought.

To paraphrase former President Bill Clinton, "There is nothing wrong with Hartford that cannot be cured with what is right in Hartford."

"Hartford's People Have the Power" to commit and to succeed and we will do it together.

Thank you and God Bless the City of Hartford.