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2007 State of the City Address
Mayor Coleman Outlines Neighborhood Initiatives
and Calls to Residents to Join in Planning 2012 Bicentennial

(Columbus) Mayor Michael B. Coleman brought together hundreds of citizens and community leaders tonight for the State of the City Address, outlining a vision for the next five years as Columbus prepares for its **Bicentennial in 2012**. The Mayor also provided updates on the challenges facing Columbus and initiatives that continue to improve local housing, address safety concerns and support the local economy.

In his eighth State of the City Address, Mayor Coleman touched on issues pre-announced this week from the speech, including the AEP Foundation's commitment of \$10 million to the **Scioto Mile** park system, the tour of **Skybus'** new gate at Port Columbus, **Operation Safe-Walks** – a **\$50 million commitment** to build needed sidewalks and infrastructure along major roads or near schools. The Mayor will also host a "green tour" of the historic Lazarus building tomorrow morning.

The Mayor followed up on major initiatives announced in previous years, such as **Home Again**, a \$25 million plan to address vacant and abandoned housing. During tonight's presentation, the Mayor announced how the City of Columbus is ramping up Home Again in 2007 – when we will be spending an estimated \$8 million from the committed funds. Since last June, Home Again has helped 105 families keep their homes by providing free roofs, in addition, more than 75 abandoned homes were demolished and more were purchased for rehabilitation. The City and Habitat for Humanity also built the first new home in Franklinton in 50 years.

The following text is from Mayor Michael B. Coleman's 2007 State of the City Address. While some changes may occur during delivery, this represents the majority of the message to be delivered.

SOC 2007:

Thank you for that fine introduction by our Auditor Hugh Dorrian, Bill Connor and Angela Pace with CAPA. Thank you Mary McClendon for national anthem.

Let me acknowledge our partners for progress: City Attorney Rick Pfeiffer, City Council President Michael Mentel, and Members of City Council, Kevin Boyce, Charleta Tavares, Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, Patsy Thomas, and our newest members - Andrew Ginther and Priscilla Tyson. Thank you to all the elected officials here tonight - and our partners in the County Commissioners Mary Jo

Kilroy, Paula Brooks and Marilyn Brown. Also thanks to all those from the suburbs and townships of Central Ohio and from the Statehouse.

I want to thank Columbus' 1st Lady, Frankie Coleman, as well as our children JD and Justin. Kim is in Chicago. I also want to acknowledge my brother Jeff and Aunt Elaine Pittman.

I want to acknowledge my team, my cabinet and staff, who take on every challenge and believe so strongly in this City, led by Chief of Staff Mike Reese. Most of all tonight, let me thank all City employees and the leaders of Organized Labor who represent them so well. Tonight, let's all put our hands together for the hardest working employees in the world, our SNOW WARRIORS! More than 250 plow drivers and water-line repair crews, from several departments battled the worst snow and ice storm in several years, in 12 hour shifts for more than a week to keep our roads open and safe. They have the toughest job in the City and we appreciate all they do.

And to all of you here tonight - welcome. Tonight, I want to speak to you about Columbus, and the kind of City we are building together, not just for our coming days and months, but for our coming decades and more.

I begin tonight where Columbus began: Franklinton. In 1795, Lucas Sullivant came to the spot near the Olentangy and Scioto rivers and decided it would be a good place for a town. Two years later, he began laying out the boundaries for Franklinton, where settlers built homes, the area's first school, the first church, and even the first tavern, all log cabins. In 1816, Sullivant built the first bridge - linking Franklinton with a future downtown. The area's first fire department consisted of every available male and there was a rule requiring everyone to keep a bucket handy. And there were good deals to be had - if you wanted to buy land - you could trade a gallon of whiskey for an acre. When Ohio became a state in 1803, its capital was in Chillicothe, then it moved to Zanesville and then back to Chillicothe again. After years of squabbling, on February 14, 1812, Valentine's Day, the state legislature chose to make its capital on a spot they called the "high banks of the Scioto," what would become the City of Columbus. The legislature finally got one right!

Jacob Studer also wrote a history of Columbus, and said, "It was not of its own seeking that Columbus became the capital of Ohio. That was its destiny from the beginning." From our humble origins, today, our City's destiny remains one of greatness - where every resident can prosper, where every neighborhood can be strong, where we can live safe and healthy lives, fueled with the hope that we can and will make our dreams a reality.

It is this destiny that we will celebrate in 2012, our City's Bicentennial. Our city's 200th birthday will serve as a reminder that Columbus was born by an act of our legislature, but made into what it is today by the will of our people. A bicentennial

is commonly a celebration of the past, but as we commemorate our past, I want us to envision our future as well. I believe it's time to assess our strengths and weaknesses. It's time to aspire to even greater progress for all our people. I am asking my fellow citizens to see this city as they would like it to be, to dream of this city as they wish it could be, then join me as we roll up our sleeves and make it so. Because, my fellow citizens, the state of the city is strong, stronger than it's ever been, but not as strong as it will be.

Now, there's much to be proud of. We're investing in housing. We're cleaning up older neighborhoods. We're fighting crime. We're fighting for jobs. Many of America's big cities are losing residents – in the last 15 years Cincinnati and Cleveland each lost 50-thousand residents, Detroit lost 1 million people, but Columbus grew by more than 100-thousand residents. After an extensive study, just last week, Columbus was once again chosen as one of the top cities in the nation for African American families. Why is this important? Because African American families want what all families want – good housing, great neighborhoods and most importantly - a chance to succeed. These are good things. But we must always strive to be better and stronger because our best days are still ahead.

Let us now resolve to make 2012 not only the Columbus bicentennial, but the Columbus renaissance. To this end, I am announcing that we will create the 2012 Commission. They will be charged with the responsibility of reaching out to all our residents to look forward, to plan for what our city can be in 2012. Over the next 20 Months, as we start planning for our bicentennial, I am asking every resident from every neighborhood, every church, every barber shop, every grocery, everybody to join me and the 2012 Commission. We're going to be searching for history and determining our city's future. Members of the 2012 Commission will be asked to think, to plan, but most importantly - to listen. Listen at neighborhood meetings across this city. Listen at special events in our schools.

Commission members and Columbus residents alike will be asked to think big – not to ask what would be easy, not to ask what would be cheap, but to ask what would matter to them, to their neighbors, and to our future. I will ask commission members to produce a plan, but not a plan that gathers dust on a shelf. We need a plan for action. So I say we must put our money where our mouth is, part of that will be from private investors, but the City will do its part. As such, today I am proposing that our 2012 plan be backed up by a vote of the people, and putting our neighborhood priorities on the Ballot in the form of a Bicentennial Bond Package in November of 2008. This Bicentennial Bond Package will be the largest in the City's history and I look forward to working with Council Finance Chair Kevin Boyce and Auditor Hugh Dorrian to get it passed. Voter approval of this Bicentennial Bond Package would allow neighborhood investments like never before in infrastructure, public facilities, and public improvements. We will lift up neighborhoods. We will create jobs. And we will keep our age-old promise

not to increase our taxes to pay for bond packages, including this Bicentennial Bond Package.

Some needs are more obvious than others, and tonight I'll outline a few that I want to see addressed by 2012. We must reclaim blighted brown-fields and industrial sites in our neighborhoods. Over the past 200 years, our city was blessed with a strong manufacturing sector that created good jobs, good pay and helped our city prosper. But, over the years, many of those manufacturing plants closed down, from the Timken Plant in Milo Grogan, to the Techneglass Plant on the South Side, to the Columbus Coated Fabrics plant in Weinland Park, leaving behind jobless and struggling families, needy neighborhoods and land unfit for productive use. These closed plants left behind the scar of contamination, depressing the entire area and making it virtually impossible to rebuild until the land is cleaned. Today, I'm proposing that the Bicentennial Bond Package authorize a multi-million dollar pool of money, solely dedicated to clean up blighted properties like these and put them back into productive use. We will call this the "Clean Columbus Development Fund." The journey to reuse the land will spark our economy, transforming blighted sites into productive land, for new jobs, new homes, and new hope.

From the Bicentennial Bond Package, I also believe we should fund a new generation of family recreation centers, to address the evolving recreational needs of Columbus families. We are improving recreation centers now. The new Brentnell Recreation Center will be rededicated in March, and a renovation and expansion of the Whetstone Recreation Center will begin this spring. But, too many parts of Columbus have recreation centers built in the 1950's, 60's, 70's and 1980's that served our people well in the past, and continue to be used in the present, but fail to meet the diverse needs of a 21st Century City. Some areas of the City are barely served at all, so I am proposing a new kind of recreation facility, that will be called "Family Centers." Family Centers will contain pools, tennis courts, community rooms, and workout facilities. They will have senior services, fitness, wellness and health care services, after-school programs and day care. Family centers will be state of the art – designed and programmed to meet the needs of our families. We are also continuing to connect the entire county with fitness trails where people can walk, run and bike. We have made great progress here as our City has improved from 5th Fattest City in the nation to 19th Fittest City. We must continue that momentum, and we will with 58 miles of biking and walking trails today - we must expand up to 110 miles by 2012. I look forward to working with our new City Councilmember Priscilla Tyson on all our parks.

Even as we invest in parks, we must also invest in older neighborhoods. For more than 60 years, parts of Columbus were annexed into the City without the basics, like sewers, curbs, or sidewalks. This has created an infrastructure inequity. Now we're playing an expensive game of catch-up. Since 2000, we've made great strides by investing \$30 million to build more than 70 miles of

sidewalks, 11 miles around schools. We've built sidewalks to Maize Elementary School in Northland, on the South Side along Watkins Road, on the West Side in front of Briggs High School and along Sullivant and Demorest. But still to this day, too many children must dodge cars in the street because no sidewalks exist, too many seniors must take their lives into their hands because curbs cannot separate cars from people, and too many areas have bad drainage. Although we have done much in this area, I strongly believe we should do more. To this end, we will combine resources in our existing Capital Budget with new authority in the Bicentennial Bond Package totaling \$50 million dollars in a new initiative of public investment called "OPERATION SAFE-WALKS". We will build sidewalks, and where necessary add curbs, gutters and in some cases even new roadways. Not every street is getting sidewalks through this program, but certain main roads where there's a clear need, especially on the way to school. Let's start on our South Side, along main roads like Parsons Avenue, Lockbourne Road, or roads with schools like Fairwood Avenue and Koebel Road. These improvements will forever change the South Side for the better. And, we need to take action along Joyce Avenue, near Saint Stephens Community House and new homes that have been built. There will be other roads and neighborhoods added in the coming months and years to Operation Safe-Walks, but this commitment will take our sidewalk initiative to a new level. While this project seems ambitious, that's what we need for 2012, the ambition to do better and the resources to get the job done! I look forward to working with Councilmember Maryellen O'Shaughnessy on these important projects.

Even as we have set 2012 as the goal for completing new initiatives, we must continue to move forward with the progress we're already making today. In 2004's State of the City Address, I announced an ambitious plan to bring back the King Lincoln District to its former glory. It is heavy lifting to be sure, but we are making giant strides towards fulfillment of that dream. The King Lincoln District has seen seven major projects - \$30 million in all, from residential to commercial - and "the Whitney" town-home construction breaks ground this spring. The renovation on the Lincoln Theater will begin this summer, thanks to our great partners, the Franklin County Commissioners, who have committed \$4 million matching the City's \$4 million and allowing us to get started. In addition, the State has kicked in \$350,000 in Capital support. When complete, the Lincoln Theater will be a state of the art 500 seat facility for performances, concerts, plays and digital recording. It will serve as a catalyst for the development of the King Lincoln District. But building and operating a great historic theater isn't enough, because it is the art, and the artists, who give the district its magic and life. Today, I'm pleased to announce a new round of partnerships that will take the Lincoln Theater to a new level. The Jazz Arts Group will perform 13 concerts a year in the Theater. The Jazz Arts Group will initiate a new Jazz Academy in the theater to train a whole new generation of musicians and performers who can take their talents to every part of Columbus and the world. Further, the corporate community is investing in the dream as well by making commitments totaling more than \$1.6 million. Thank you to Nationwide Insurance, Limited, Inc., Wolfe

Enterprises, Huntington National Bank, Columbus Foundation. Just a few years ago, it was unheard of to see this kind of private investment in the King Lincoln District. Revitalizing the King Lincoln District has long been a dream of many, and day by day, step by step, we will reach the mountain top.

We have also worked to strengthen our neighborhoods by strengthening home ownership. In my last state of the City, I laid down the gauntlet against the blight of vacant and abandoned houses. We are devoting \$25 million over the next five years to tackle 1,000 homes and properties, to abate, renovate or demolish. This effort is called HOME AGAIN and house by house we are attacking the problem of abandoned buildings. We started HOME AGAIN where our city was born in Franklinton. And we just moved a family into the FIRST NEW HOME BUILT in Franklinton in 50 years. Just think a new home has not been built in Franklinton for a half Century! Our thanks to Habitat for Humanity and our other partners! We will break ground this spring on at least 15 more new homes on vacant lots in Franklinton. Let there be no doubt about it, this neighborhood is not on its back, it's on its way back and the entire city will be a better place for it.

Since the beginning of Home Again in June, we've impacted 176 properties citywide. We're ramping up in 2007, investing \$8 million more this year to address another 540 or so properties, from roof repair, furnaces and acquisition, rehab or demolition.

As we fight the blight of vacant and abandoned housing, we must never cease to fight against the perpetrators of poverty, the demons of decay and the captains of crime. The worst of the worst right now is Woodland Meadows. It is the very definition of blight, and it must be demolished. Woodland Meadows mere existence is a detriment to our residents' health, safety and welfare. So we've taken the owners to court to declare it a nuisance. And one week ago, the Franklin County Environmental Court agreed. Thank you Judge Harlan Hale, City Attorney Rick Pfeiffer and Councilmember Patsy Thomas, who helped toughen up City Code on vacant properties. We will begin demolishing Woodland Meadows by this spring. From its destruction, one day something good will rise from the ashes.

I've been to Woodland Meadows, I've seen the apartments that look bombed out, stripped of their building materials. Criminals are stealing everything from catalytic converters off cars to manhole covers, copper pipes and aluminum siding. We've reason to believe that some scrap metal dealers continue to buy these stolen items and we are taking action. By working with Councilmember Andrew Ginther, we will begin to license scrap metal yards, requiring every seller's personal identification and information on every sale. This data will be shared with our Police and we stand ready to impose criminal penalties on anyone caught buying and selling stolen materials.

Public safety is one of the most important missions in this City. Since late 2004, through the Mayor's Strike Force and anti-gang initiatives, Columbus Police made 1,200 arrests and took 420 guns off the street. These arrests have a significant positive impact on neighborhoods by taking some of the "worst of the worst" suspects off of our streets.

We're also giving Police Officers and Firefighters more tools to do their job, like the 1,000 walkie radios we purchased recently. I did not know when or where a radio walkie would save the life of a police officer, or the life of a citizen. I only knew it would. Last November, at a United Dairy Farmers store, Officer Melanie Stevens was attacked during a robbery and called for back up assistance. Officers Jason Wood and Bradley Thomas were on special duty assignments nearby, and in the past many officers on special duty did not have radios. Hearing the call on their walkies, they raced to the scene and disarmed the robbery suspect, saving the officer and customers. Tonight, I'm happy to announce we'll invest at least \$500,000 to purchase and maintain more of our walkies.

While our Police target those who do wrong, we are working to help our young people make positive decisions. That's why, with the help of Councilmember Kevin Boyce, we have organized the African American Male Empowerment Commission, to reach out to young black men to get more of them on the right track. Part of staying on the right track is staying in school for all students. Far too many young people are skipping school... wandering the streets of Columbus, loitering and being unproductive at best, committing crimes at worst. Each of us has a responsibility to keep our students in the classroom — parents, teachers, principals, community members, the courts, and the City. In 2002, 1,100 Truancy cases were referred to Juvenile Court. In 2005 and 2006 school year, 3,000 referrals were made. In the spring of 2005 our police picked up 582 kids in just a few months. Starting in March, the City will step up again to crack down on truancy, with three teams of Columbus Police Officers patrolling our streets and taking kids to the City's Truancy Center, where parents are called to be parents. We all know that police enforcement is only one of several important intervention strategies, and I applaud Dr. Gene Harris and County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien and neighborhood leaders who are working on solutions to this challenge. We are here to be your partners.

Our City's focus on safety also includes hiring and training more Police Officers and Firefighters each year. By December, we will have more police officers (1,909) and Firefighters (1,555) than at any time in our history, and more than any other City in Ohio. My thanks to Council President Mike Mentel, our partner in funding these classes. We will continue to hire more Police and Firefighters to get the job done, and we're ready to deal with retirements, as we've already built a brand new state-of-the-art Police Academy to take larger classes and we are about to break ground on an expansion of the Fire Training Academy, where firefighters will prepare for every challenge they might face in the field. And let me note, with great pride that the Department of Homeland Security stated that

Columbus is one of the five most prepared cities in the nation to deal with an emergency or disaster. Thank you to Deputy Chief John Rockwell and his team. I also want to give a shout out to Fire Chief Ned Pettus, and all the members of the Division, soon to be recognized as among America's best, as they are earning National recognition from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. Only one other big city in America has earned such high marks.

Everything we do as a city, every program, every new structure, relies upon our strong economic base. While our state lost 230,000 jobs in the past few years, City deals have created and kept 21,000 jobs and leveraged \$3 billion in private investment. While we've lost some jobs, we are still the economic shining star in Ohio. One way we've done that is by helping to start Columbus' first hometown airlines - Skybus. After three years of planning and persuading, we've raised \$100 million and provided City and State performance incentives to this bold new venture. The first plane to take flight is the "Spirit of Columbus." Skybus will create 1,200 direct jobs, 10,000 indirect jobs, and its impact will ripple through our economy, with \$600 million in new private investment and 5.3 million new visitors and Skybus passengers to the city.

Skybus will fly from Port Columbus International Airport another great asset for our economic future. We must use the opening of Skybus as a catalyst for even more development around Port Columbus. We've already begun seeing activity, like the redevelopment of the Bedford landfill, the Chalmers P. Wylie Veterans Administration Hospital, and the expansions at DSCC, but it's time to take it to the next level. Today, I'm proud to announce that after long discussions with the Mayors of Gahanna and Whitehall, we are joining forces to create The Port Columbus Growth Partnership. The partnership will position the entire area around Port Columbus as a key job center for our region. Together, we will create a new economic development corridor called the Port Columbus Area Development District. This District will include multi-jurisdictional planning... shared infrastructure investment, joint marketing and multi-jurisdictional business incentives - all aimed at getting companies to locate, expand and grow near the airport. Today, there are 400 vacant acres which could accommodate two to four million square feet of new development enough to bring 10 to 20,000 new jobs to Columbus, Whitehall and Gahanna. This is regional cooperation in action, where three jurisdictions can work in partnership to build an economy that benefits each other. Port Columbus is our front door and an economic engine in this region that must be leveraged. Port Columbus supports about 23,000 jobs, generates \$2.2 billion in economic activity, and has 400 businesses around the airport. I want to thank our partners at the Columbus Regional Airport Authority, Mayor Becky Stinchcomb of Gahanna and Mayor Lynn Ochsendorf of Whitehall, for their vision and for their willingness to work on this Win-Win-Win relationship.

We must continue to work across the city to bring back jobs and opportunities to neighborhoods. In August 2004, I stood with employees who were being laid off

on the South Side at Techneglas, victims of a state economy that saw an exodus of manufacturing jobs from Ohio. Starting on the South Side in 1902, Techneglas was the largest manufacturer of television glass in North America and it employed 1,700 people in good paying jobs with health benefits. It shut its doors forever. While we tried to comfort them from their pain and tears, many were retrained for new jobs, but many were left unemployed. It is with great pleasure and great pride - South Side Pride - to lift up the South Side of Columbus once again. We are working with a private development group, whose intent is to transform this blighted, vacant and abandoned eyesore into office space, neighborhood retail, and light manufacturing. If the Developer keeps moving forward, and works with residents, we will help them by supporting an application for State Grants to clean up the Techneglas site from environmental hazards. This rejuvenation could generate 1,500 new jobs on the South Side. While much work needs to be done with the neighborhood residents, organizations and the City, this redevelopment brings great prospects of putting people back to work on the South Side of Columbus.

As we build neighborhoods and the economy for the future, we've got to keep Getting Green. Sustainability isn't just something to talk about, it is critical to our long-term success as a nation. There's a Get Green update available tonight, to show some of what we've been up to. Two years ago, I launched the Get Green Columbus challenge. Since then we've had real successes – attracting green businesses, reducing city vehicle emissions, and creating a preference for green vendors of the City. From building a new green neighborhood called Greenview Estates, to planting thousands of trees, and leading the Big Darby Accord process, Columbus is doing all it can to clean the air, clean our water, attract green jobs and build green homes and businesses, and to expanding recycling. And we have the biggest Green Rehab Project in the Midwest right here in Columbus - our historic Lazarus Building.

Last year, I charged the Columbus Chamber to determine how to keep and attract young professional residents. Some people asked – why does this matter? Well it's simple, in the next 10 to 15 years there will be two people retiring from my generation for every one young worker entering the job market. Cities and businesses will be competing for every worker. We know businesses don't locate here for the mountains, or the beaches, or the weather, but we do have the most important asset of all to offer the companies of tomorrow a large pool of young, educated graduates. Every year nearly 20,000 graduate from our colleges and universities, and we must make sure they stay here. Early research shows that Columbus is great for young workers - they like the jobs and neighborhoods... but they want better transportation and more arts. In the coming months, we'll be taking more steps, launching the Mayor's Young Professionals Advisory Committee, and we plan to host a statewide Young Professionals Summit in 2007. Rebecca Ryan and Ty Marsh will have an extensive update on the research next week, at the Columbus Chamber's Annual Meeting.

There is a great tide of momentum downtown, and we need to continue it. I've charged the newly aligned Columbus Downtown Development Corporation and Capitol South, under the leadership of Guy Worley, to bring together the public and private sectors, so we can accomplish important projects downtown by our Bicentennial. One is just a block away from Lazarus, where we're bringing new life to one of Columbus' greatest assets - our Riverfront. Every great city must contain a magnificent park in its downtown, and by 2012, we will finish the Scioto Mile. To the South, Whittier Street Peninsula, where the Audubon Society, the City of Columbus and Metro Parks are developing a nature center where our young can learn and experience God's good earth. To the north, at North Bank Park, where condos and profound economic development has occurred at the Arena District. Now we must fill in the middle - the East Bank. A great corporate partner, AEP, led by Mike Morris, is committing the largest single private contribution to a park development in the City's history. AEP's contribution will be the lead gift to transform the East bank of the Scioto Mile from a highway to a park, \$10 million dollars of private investment solely for public purposes. This is the kind of lead private investment we appreciate, and it will serve as a catalyst for other commercial and residential development in downtown. And the City is stepping up too, matching AEP's contribution with a dollar for dollar city contribution.

That's not all, we must build on the momentum of housing creation downtown, because it's working. We will reach our goal of 10,000 housing units easily by 2012. This should bring 15,000 people to live downtown. We will make major strides towards this end by transforming nine city blocks of mostly surface parking lots between 4th and 6th streets near CCAD and Gay and Long Street into 300 Chicago style two and three story town-homes. These new condos will not only create new homes, but a "new neighborhood," with parks and trees and an environment unlike any other in downtown. It also will be priced to attract a broad economic spectrum of residents, from first-time buyers to higher-end options.

As we look to build our economy, we need to remember that tourism is a vital industry in Columbus. Each year, we have nearly ten million visitors, spending more than \$5 billion annually in our community. That's right, \$5 billion dollars each year at our hotels, restaurants and attractions. According to Experience Columbus, tourism is one of the top job creators in our community, with more than 140,000 workers. You know that I worked with the Ohio Republican Party a few months ago to attract the National Republican Convention to Columbus in 2008. Yes, that's right, me and the Republican Party, all in the same room. It became clear to me that Columbus was not even in the same league to attract a convention of that size and importance because our city had neither the number of rooms, nor the quality of rooms to be competitive. Not only are we not competitive, for national conventions, we are losing our edge for regional and state conventions as well. Baltimore, Phoenix, Denver, Portland and Indianapolis

are all looking at or building 650 to 1,100 room convention hotels. A city that does not change is a city that will fall behind, and we are in danger of falling behind in this area. Our city must encourage the construction of a new full-service, 500 to 750 room, convention hotel downtown. In fact, recent studies indicate that a new, world-class, convention hotel will generate 2,600 new jobs and \$440 million in economic benefit to our city over 10 years. To get the job done, I am charging the Convention Facilities Authority to work with the Columbus Downtown Development Corporation and Experience Columbus to determine the feasibility of a new convention hotel, and if it is feasible - get it done.

Finally... when we're talking about the future of Downtown, by 2012, we need to deal with the biggest challenge on the block - City Center. While I cannot at this time announce a specific plan, one is developing. City Center must be solved and we will solve it either with a capable, cooperative and well-financed, private developer, or we will do it ourselves.

We've talked about buildings, we've talked about neighborhoods, we've talked about jobs, but, ultimately, a city is its people. And as our bicentennial approaches, as we assess our great city, I submit to you we are only as strong as the weakest among us. Our nation, our state and our city, have experienced an increase in poverty. That is unacceptable. We must attack poverty just as aggressively as we pursue the gleaming buildings of downtown. We must make the human condition the first order of business as we envision the future of our city. United Way of Central Ohio is set on a path to face poverty aggressively and we must stand with them shoulder to shoulder with new ideas to attack poverty with all we've got. And we have created a new team, the Columbus Franklin County Community Action Agency, to deal with issues of poverty in Columbus, and I applaud council member Charleta Tavares for all she continues to do in this area. We cannot be great as a city unless we all climb the ladder of economic prosperity together. That's why we will build a state-of-the-art, Family Health Center on the South Side to replace the demolished John Maloney Center, and on West Broad in the Hilltop. That's why we fight for every single job. We are training and retaining the workforce with new skills to meet an employment market that demands the workers be ready. We do this through the Central Ohio Workforce Investment Council.

Tonight, I've laid out some critical parts of my agenda – but I want to hear from you, how you vision this city by our Bicentennial. This City contains every kind of person - initiators and procrastinators, innovators and followers, creators and users, talkers and doers. I'm looking for "Initiators" tonight, the "doers," the "innovators." Those who bring character, context and a can-do spirit to a great, growing city. Just like Lucas Sullivant, the first initiator in Columbus. Before there was High Street, or Broad Street, a Capitol building, or OSU, Sullivant laid his stake in the ground and said he will make the banks of the Scioto his home. His vision set off a chain of events that would ultimately become Columbus, our

21st Century City. Today's initiators are just as important, as they see a need, they fill the need, they get things done. Your city needs you to step up. Just like Columbus' Police Officers Amy and Tim Welsh, they saw too many houses lacking lighting in their patrol area, and they stepped up to help. Amy and Tim started a nonprofit – called Nana's Night Lights – to install free motion detectors and lights outside people's homes. 300 low-income residents – many of them elderly – are safer in their homes because of Amy and Tim's efforts. It's the same way with Kenneth Williams and Allen Carrel on the South Side, when their neighborhood was looking bad from trash and debris, they organized kids in the area to pick up the trash themselves. When the snow storm hit our city just a week ago, Sean Rogers, a Linden resident, put his plow into action to clear snow from 53 driveways of senior citizens. Sean put shovels in the hands of 4 of his 9 children to help. When offered payment for his services, Sean turned it down and said, "Give me a hug, and pass it along." No one told Kenneth, Allen, Sean, Amy and Tim to perform these acts of goodness, but together these few touched the lives of hundreds. They just took the initiative. Like another great American who is here tonight, a Marine and a hero, who didn't wait when fate called. On September 11th 2001, Jason Thomas was in New York City, and by now, I'm sure you all know his story, he saved lives that day because he took action. Now he lives here in Central Ohio, our neighbor, with that same can do attitude, raising his kids in our community. Jason, Kenneth, Allen, Sean, Amy and Tim, please stand. Thank you all for being initiators! And for inspiring us.

My friends and fellow Citizens of Columbus, join me now, I am asking you to step up and stand on the shoulders of our history to make our city better, safer and stronger.

Thank you and God Bless.