

2015 State of the Village Address
Village President Keith Giagnorio

Good Afternoon. I want to thank the Chamber of Commerce for hosting this event. To those in this room, to those watching us on cable and to those who will read these remarks- I'm proud to tell you that the State of our Village is strong. And it is strong in great part to many here today.

The Chamber of Commerce, business owners and operators represented here, are our partners in promoting, maintaining and advancing our great town. Partnerships and solid working relationships are what have made our Village strong.

Two years ago, I entered office at a crossroads. Following the 2013 elections, half our Board members were new and we were still recovering from the loss of our respected, long time Village President Bill Mueller. We were all Lombardians, but we were not yet a team. We needed to build trust, we needed to gain confidence and we needed to improve our communication.

We found that common ground. Today, we are a team. We are partners. We are united in working together to enhance our quality of life, safeguard our families and neighborhoods and promote job creation and investment. Do we agree on every single issue? Not always. But healthy debate leads us to make the best possible choices for our citizens.

We developed a VISION, set GOALS to fulfill that vision, identified the necessary resources to accomplish our goals and now we are turning those goals into ACTION. And we all agree, that we will always work together for the betterment of our residents and businesses.

Our overarching goal was to make our Village the best possible partner and servant to our residents and businesses that it could be. I am privileged to work with these fine public servants. Please join me in acknowledging our Trustees-

Laura Fitzpatrick, Bill Ware, Mike Fugiel, Dan Whittington, and Reid Foltyniewicz.

You might notice that I only mentioned five Trustees. That is because we now have a vacancy on the Board.

Peter Breen, who served as Trustee for over three years and as Acting Village President after the death of President Mueller, was elected as our State Representative this past November, the first Lombardian ever to do so.

While this may have been a loss on our Board, Representative Breen will be our advocate and partner in Springfield. It's good to know that Lombard will have a strong voice in Springfield as we work with the state to improve our roads, enhance our quality of life and protect our taxpayers. We thank Peter for his years of dedicated service to Lombard. The Village Board and I look forward to continuing to work with him at the State level.

The State is our partner in progress. The Vista Pond Expansion Project that provides much needed additional storm water storage, was funded in part by a \$500,000 state grant. This partnership allowed us to alleviate flooding problems, extend the walking path, add more fish, and maintain the recreational aspects of the pond.

The Illinois Department of Transportation is partnering with us, through their Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program, to reconstruct the Hill Avenue Bridge. The bridge, built in 1955, has deteriorated to the point that we were forced to impose weight limits. The new bridge will be a three span bridge, 75' in length and roughly 40' in width. The new construction will also provide for a sidewalk on the south side of the bridge. IDOT will provide 80% of the over two million dollar estimated cost, with the Village of Glen Ellyn and Lombard splitting the remaining 20%.

We are also partnering with the Illinois Commerce Commission and Union Pacific Rail Road to increase safety by upgrading the crossing gates at Elizabeth Street to a quad gate system. Gates would extend across the north and southbound lanes to prevent a vehicle from entering the crossing when trains are approaching. This is a significant safety enhancement to the crossing. The Village will contribute just over \$100,000 with all the remaining funding provided by the ICC.

Laura Fitzpatrick, Trustee in District 5 is also leaving us, but she will continue to be part of Lombard's progress, serving as District Director for Senator Chris Nybo. Thank you for your service to Lombard, Laura.

As Chairman of our Economic and Community Development Committee, Laura was a driving force in her support for the Lombard Town Centre, a public private partnership that promotes economic development in our downtown.

The Lombard Town Centre has been a wise investment that has paid great dividends. Our downtown is revitalized with new stores, offices and restaurants which are only enhanced by the events the Centre sponsors that bring people from around the region into our Village. These events have brought an exciting new energy to our downtown. Remember, increased foot traffic will help our businesses remain viable.

Businesses are improving the facades and the interiors of spaces, making downtown even more attractive for new investment. The historic Lombard Hotel has just been privately purchased and we look forward to new development at this site.

A major façade renovation has transformed a long vacant structure at 130 E. St. Charles Road. Three new businesses will be occupying the building: Mesa Electronics, Mesa Home Video, and Lori's Jewelry. Balkan Bakery will be opening a new bakery and deli with outdoor seating. We added DryTini, Clasha and the Gathering Lighthouse downtown, with more businesses on the way. We have also just learned that a lease has just been signed for a historically themed family restaurant and bar at 18 W. St. Charles Road featuring a fresh and locally produced menu.

As part of our 2015 vision, we will continue to work with downtown business owners to enhance their properties, strengthen their partnerships and expand their marketing efforts.

YOUR SUCCESS IS OUR SUCCESS.

A great support to the on-going success of our downtown is the new underpass at the METRA station. The new pedestrian tunnel, ADA compliant ramps, stairways, platform shelters, and the canopies over both platforms, are nearing completion. It is expected that the tunnel will be opened around April 1st.

This underpass eliminates the at-grade pedestrian crossing and reduces the potential for pedestrian accidents. But this underpass also increases access to our vibrant downtown. It brings our town together; linking the Library, Maple Street Chapel, the Victorian Cottage/Carriage House and our Crown Jewel-- Lilacia Park.

That is why it was important to the Board that this be more than just a tunnel, but that it be an attractive, inviting gateway into our town. Increasing foot traffic increases business allowing businesses to stay and grow.

Our great partners in Lombard's progress are our staff. We are very fortunate to have accomplished, dedicated professionals throughout all our Departments that work to provide the highest quality of services while being ever conscious of taxpayer dollars. They treat the residents and businesses with the respect you, our customer, deserve. Our staff, led by

Village Manager Scott Niehaus and Assistant Village Manager Nicole Aranas, share the Board's vision for a Lombard without equal. But they not only share that vision, they implement it.

It seems we can no longer have winter in our region without a blizzard. Our Public Works team, led by Director Carl Goldsmith, has proven that our Public Works Department can manage infrastructure projects such as the Vista Pond Expansion as well as they can roll with the winds and the snow, and two years ago the floods.

They maintain the infrastructure we all rely on. They worked tirelessly on the roadway improvements and resurfacing of North Grace Street, where Village staff completed the project at a significant cost savings over the use of an outside contractor.

We also constructed a new fuel dispensing facility on the Village complex, providing additional pumping capacity at a more central, and accessible location. Maintenance costs were high and the age and location of the 40 year old facility made fueling and traffic flow difficult. Now, the Village's fleet of 130 different vehicles can refuel more conveniently and without impacting Public Works operations.

Public Works, along with our Village Manager and the Finance Department continue to identify ways to partner in long-term strategies for funding capital improvements. The 2015 Capital Improvement Plan proposed expenditures are just over 19 million dollars. Key projects include

continued water system, storm and sewer improvements, street construction and maintenance, and sidewalk improvements.

Good streets, walkable sidewalks, and reliable water and sewer systems are what we owe our taxpayers. But they are also some of the assets a business looks for when considering relocating or expanding.

Thank you Carl and all your staff.

One of the reasons the State of Our Village is sound is because our finances are sound. Our budget is balanced. Our spending is disciplined and we are dedicated to finding efficiencies and leveraging resources. Reflecting that budget discipline, this year's General Fund budget reduces expenditures by approximately 3%.

Our Finance Director, Tim Sexton, has once again led his team to win the Distinguished Budget Award. Congratulations, Tim and thank you for being careful stewards of the taxpayers' money.

A water rate increase imposed by the City of Chicago, along with an Operating and Maintenance increase from the DuPage Water Commission, forced a recent raise in Lombard's water rates that went into effect in January. Despite those increases, the Village of Lombard's utility rates remain below average among comparable communities in our region.

Additionally, Chicago will use the increase to improve infrastructure and increase reliability and efficiency. That will help the Village control

operating costs and also allow us to reserve funds for future system maintenance.

In another financially smart move for Lombard residents, through our Electric Aggregation program, we switched back to ComEd as our energy supplier. ComEd's rates were lower than other bidders and the average savings for a resident through the first five months has been around \$25.00. We will continue to monitor rates and we have the ability to go back out to the competitive market in a year to make sure our residents are getting the lowest responsible rate.

Our participation in the DuPage Municipal Partnering Initiative allows us to jointly purchase goods and services with other communities to achieve lower costs. This innovative initiative joins communities together to jointly bid, contract, share and purchase services and goods. This year, thru our partnering, we saved 17% on the cost of hydrant painting, over 32% on water meter testing and 33% on sewer lining.

But this is just the beginning. We continue to explore opportunities for resource sharing. This year we hope to expand that program into savings on liquid application for snow and ice control, landscape maintenance, facility cleaning and employee training.

We have also tasked the Finance Department with increasing the use of technology and providing more on-line services for our residents and businesses to interact with the Village 24/7.

LOMBARD IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS.

We continue to attract new businesses, and improve and expand facilities, not just in downtown but throughout the Village. Last year, we issued over two thousand permits --our largest development season since 2007. We welcomed 143 new businesses; from motor vehicle sales to manufacturers, new restaurants, corporate offices and warehouses.

Our vibrant business environment is attracting retail, commercial and industrial businesses. Joining the Roosevelt Road business corridor is Drive Time, a car dealership new to the Chicago market. Sleepy's and Kentwood Office Furniture are two other businesses that have moved into spaces that were long vacant, adding to the vitality of our commercial corridors.

Lombard continues its reputation as a dining mecca as more new restaurants open. Casa Real Restaurant and Noon Whistle Brewing have opened on Roosevelt Road. Dunkin Donuts will be opening a new store on North Avenue at Grace Street.

Native Floral Group has relocated and expanded on Lombard Road. They just completed a new 59,000 square foot office and warehouse and are employing 90 workers.

Yorktown Shopping Center continues to make improvements adding new restaurants, new retail offerings and improving and enhancing the shopping experience. The AMC Movie Theatre has enriched the movie-going experience with more leg room, wider aisles, and enhanced food and

beverage. Yorktown has expanded dining options with the famed Billy Goat Tavern, Freshii, Sarku Japanese and Skinny Sweet Yogurt, just to name a few.

The popular family owned pizza and casual dining restaurant, Armand's Victory Tap, just opened. Additional signed lease agreements include BZ's Twisted American Cuisine, Salseria Lombard, Francesca's Collections, 25 Silver Boutique and AT&T Wireless, just to name a few.

All of this growth and improvement is the result of some very hard work. Our Community Development Department works tirelessly to attract new investment and jobs, as well as to assist our existing businesses to prosper and thrive.

Director Bill Heniff is here today. Bill, please stand up. If you don't know Bill, I urge you to get to know him. He is your partner in success. Thanks Bill and thanks for all you and your staff do.

We are excited about attracting new businesses but we are also dedicated to making sure our existing businesses can grow and prosper as well. We want to make doing business with the Village easier. We are streamlining processes and limiting the red-tape. A goal for 2015 is to implement an on-line permit process to monitor applications via the web. Field technology will allow for quicker review and response on inspections. Code changes are underway to reduce the costs of construction by reducing bond requirements and providing for greater development flexibility. Our Building Division is working in partnership with business and property

owners to assist them in making their business plans a reality in a cost-effective manner.

As part of our on-going commitment to accessibility and transparency, pending development petitions before the Village can now be found on-line. Residents can track a development petition throughout the zoning process.

Last year, our Community Development Department conducted its voluntary Code Compliance Program. This informational effort provides property owners with basic code compliance measures for commercial properties.

This is a cost effective method to inform property owners of our codes and to assist them in keeping our community attractive and safe. The Village is currently blending the Building and Code Administration activities to provide greater efficiencies and streamline service to citizens.

Of all the operations Village government performs, there is no higher mandate than the safety and security of our citizens. Keeping our families safe and our neighborhoods secure is our highest priority. Our Police and Fire departments do that admirably. Police Chief Ray Byrne and Fire Chief Paul Di Rienzo, thank you for your service. And thank you to all the men and women in your departments who put themselves in harm's way every day to keep us safe.

Our Police and Fire Departments demonstrate unparalleled partnership and cooperation. I'm surprised when I'm at regional meetings and hear that the

Police and Fire Departments do not get along. Not these men and women. They work as partners and they give back to the community.

They have established Youth Leadership programs. They sponsor a Toy Drive and Toy Parade that is wildly successful and makes sure that Santa can visit all the children of Lombard. Last year, the Fire Department hosted its first Junior Fire Academy where high school students could learn more about the fire service through interactive lectures and hands-on drills.

The Fire Department has increased its regional cooperation and advanced its mutual aid agreements with neighboring communities in order to provide the highest degree of Fire, Emergency Medical and Emergency Management Services.

The Police Department continues its partnership with the Police Academy Alumni Association who generously volunteer and donate to support additional equipment and resources. You can even *Shop with A Cop*, helping kids, who may not otherwise have been able to buy gifts for their families.

This year, the Lombard Police Department received re-accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies or CALEA. This is the eighth time that the Police Department has received this prestigious national award. Our department continually meets national standards for the highest level of professionalism, training and best practices. Only 6% of the police departments nationwide meet this rigorous level of scrutiny.

Our Transparency Policy earned us the 100% Transparency Rating from the Illinois Policy Institute. Supporting our transparency commitment we have expanded our communications. Beyond the *Lombard Pride* resident newsletter, we have established our presence on social media, using technology to broaden our reach and to communicate and interact with our citizens in real-time.

This year we began our E-News program, blasting up to date information and alerts to the inboxes of nearly 3,000 subscribers. We have close to 2,000 Facebook friends and 1,000 Twitter followers. We post our videos to YouTube and have redesigned our website, making it more comprehensive, interactive and easy to navigate. We want our residents to keep informed about their community and we are using every tool we can to get our message out. We use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and Tumblr. While, I may not actually use all of those personally, many of you do- especially our younger residents and it is our goal to make everyone in our Village connected and informed.

And we are all connected. We are connected by our love for our hometown, whether we have been here for a lifetime or we have just moved here- This is our home.

I have lived here for over 30 years. This year my business is celebrating its 20th year in the Village. My wife Angela, who works at Glenbard East and I sent our children to Lombard schools. This truly is our home.

Many people choose their homes based on the quality of the schools system. Our excellent schools are a great partner in making Lombard so attractive to families.

The Park District is our partner in giving Lombard its *soul*. Our relationships and partnering with the Park District is unparalleled. They also host many of our events and festivals for which we are known. Those events and festivals would not be possible without the countless hours of volunteer support.

I want to thank everyone who volunteers on the Village's Committees and Commissions. Your expertise in a variety of fields, and your passion for our Village, help the Board and staff develop policies and programs that refine our vision and enhance our quality of life.

We are known for our festivals and events. This year they were as spectacular as ever. We are a community and these events bring us together.

We enjoyed Cruise Nights, the Senior Fair, the Arts & Crafts Fair, Jinglebell Jubilee, and movie and sports viewing events. We commemorated Veterans Day and Memorial Day. And we sponsored Blood Drives to support those needing life-saving transfusions. We rejoiced in one of our greatest traditions, Lilac Time and the Lilac Parade.

I said earlier that we are Lombardians. We are also all Americans. As such, we owe our very freedom to those men and women who wear the

uniform. That is why I am so proud that our Community Relations Committee began the Welcome Home Veterans Program. This program is a way for us to honor Lombard residents returning home from serving our country.

Our Police and Fire Departments work together with elected officials and the VFW Post, to make sure the Village provides a warm welcome home. We want to show them we appreciate their service and are happy and honored to have them home. If you know of a returning veteran, go to our website, click “Welcome Home Veterans.” It is the least we can do for those who do so much for us.

As I said, we love our festivals. If we didn’t, we would not get quite so passionate about the Taste of Lombard or our Lilac Princesses. But we care. It’s part of who we are.

To maintain our rich heritage and to capitalize on the energy and passion of our volunteers, I am proposing a Blue Ribbon Committee, *The Lombard Pride Committee*. This Committee will be tasked with pulling together ideas and concepts for a new summer festival. As it goes forward, this committee will focus on overseeing events and festivals to make sure that they are in keeping with Lombard’s image, traditions and character.

In all that we do as a Board, and as staff, our goal is to keep our Village STRONG.

Our **VISION** is to continue the progress, encourage the growth and support businesses to thrive.

Our **MISSION** is to be family friendly with good schools, safe streets and excellent recreational offerings.

Our **GOAL** is to be guardians of the taxpayers' dollars ----so we keep costs low and services high.

If you come away with anything from today's presentation I hope it is this-
THE STATE OF OUR VILLAGE IS STRONG.

It is **STRONG** because we are all our partners in our mutual success.

It is **STRONG** because we have worked together to achieve that success.

And it is **STRONG** because we share the same *VISION* for Lombard---- to be the greatest place to raise a family, educate our children and enjoy the greatest quality of life possible.

Lombard is strong because each and every one of us loves Lombard. We're all in this together, working with each other for the best interests of this great community.

In closing, I would like to share with you a quote from former Chicago Bulls Coach, Phil Jackson: "The strength of the team is in each individual member...the strength of each member is in the team."

Thank you for having me here today. May God Bless Lombard and may God continue to bless America.