

**City of Saginaw**  
**Mayor Brenda F. Moore**  
**2024 State of the City Address**

Good morning. I'd like to thank each of you for attending the 2024 State of the City - State of the County Address. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Gavin Goetz of AT&T Michigan for the wonderful introduction and a special thanks to the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce for hosting today's event.

In attendance this morning are my fellow council members. I cannot say enough about this group. They are outstanding leaders, hardworking and committed to this community. I would like to ask them to please stand and be acknowledged.

I must also recognize our City Manager, Tim Morales, and his management team. You will not find a more engaged, active, and responsive team of individuals. They continue to find ways to do more with less and are getting it done. When I speak today of our successes and accomplishments, it is largely due to the contributions of our city manager and that of his team.

I'd also like to thank the rest of the city administration and all city employees for their hard work and commitment to our goals. On behalf of my council colleagues, I want to thank every employee for working diligently every day to strengthen our city, grow our economy, and build unity in our neighborhoods.

Today is an exciting day in our city. To come together, reflect on our progress and to look forward to what is next.

When I addressed you last year, we were just inching our way toward a new, post-pandemic reality. And the question we faced was exactly what kind of Saginaw we would become in the aftermath of the pandemic. Would we become the Saginaw

that understood that we all need each other, a Saginaw that responds to crises with hope and perseverance? Would we become a Saginaw that took care of its fiscal house and planned for a better future? Would we become a Saginaw where everyone can enjoy a truly satisfying quality of life? The work of the past year answered all these questions, and the answer is-- "Yes." We've pivoted from crisis to recovery.

I continue to declare it's a new season, a new day in Saginaw. There IS a fresh anointing flowing our way. I truly believe that anointing, that special "something" that shows our uniqueness, that sets Saginaw above and beyond the rest, is upon our city. We are doing things in a new way, able to go beyond our regular limits and do things better. Saginaw, this is our season.

Let's stop all the complaining about the current circumstances in our city, our state, and our nation. Let's stop all the talk about what we didn't do. Let's talk about what we did do and how we can do it better.

Today, I'll share the steps we took over the past year--how we got straight to work, day in and day out, to build our collective future. A future where ALL—not just some—can thrive.

In order to achieve this future, we all dream of, we need a strong, solid foundation and that has to start at City Hall. When you step back and review where we stand financially and operationally today and compare it to where we were 10 years ago, you will see a big difference. Let's look at where we are financially. Despite the many financial challenges resulting over the past few years from the pandemic, our City Manager and his Finance Management team have been able to maintain a solid financial position by pro-actively managing our expenses and budget, reviewing every expenditure, and closely monitoring revenues. Our recent audit for Fiscal Year 2023

found no material weaknesses, and we managed to increase our general fund revenues to over \$42 million. And once again, our Office of Management and Budget has worked with city staff to present a balanced budget to City Council for FY 2025. To continue to improve our financial position in the future, there must be constant monitoring and adjustments to the budget and city operations.

I also want to point out the fact that our Office of Management and Budget and Finance Division have both received national recognition each year over the past decade from the Government Finance Officers Association. We have developed a commitment to accountability, accuracy, and transparency and do not compromise our standards and commitment to excellence.

This is all very impressive, and Tim and his Finance Management team make this look easy, but I remind you we are one of the only cities in the nation limited by a tax cap that was established in 1979. This tax cap limits our property tax revenues to 7.5 mills, or \$3.8 million dollars, which was the collection set in 1979. In other words, we are living on an income based on 1979 prices. Citizens may eventually need to ask themselves if they feel this tax cap truly benefits our community today and how it impacts future generations.

We will continue to work hard every day to strengthen our financial position, which will allow us to improve critical services, invest in our capital, and plan for our future. Let's look at city operations and the new ways we are delivering core services, building secure neighborhoods, and enhancing our infrastructure to improve the quality of life in our city.

We saw a lot of orange cones and detour signs around the city, but I believe these are signs of progress. In 2023, we were able to improve almost 4 lane miles of roads,

including major reconstruction along portions of Meredith Street and Mackinaw Street, as well as resurfacing in many areas of our downtown area. We also completed preventative rehabilitation on the Johnson and Genesee Avenue Bridges.

We worked hard throughout 2023 to build a more vibrant and livable city. Last fall, we celebrated the conversion of 1.8 miles of Wickes Park Drive to a non-motorized pathway. Thanks to a grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund, we were able to close a portion of the drive to vehicular traffic to create a safer environment for non-motorized traffic and we increased the lighting along the trail to create a safer environment for all visitors.

In 2023, the City partnered with the Michigan Fitness Foundation and the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to begin the Promoting Active Communities Collaborative Project. This project allows us to examine our policies, programs, and current environment to better understand barriers to active living and create solutions to overcome those barriers. Throughout 2023, we held multiple meetings with a committee made up of representatives from the city and county, residents, local leaders in health and active living programming. The group also began meeting with other groups in the community to receive feedback on the barriers to having an active lifestyle and develop action plans to increase physical activity and create a culture of active living. In 2024, we plan to apply for funding to implement the identified priorities and sustain community change for physical activity efforts.

Speaking of creating a culture of healthy living, I'm proud to say Saginaw has some of the finest quality water in the country. We provide safe, clean, reliable, drinking water to our city residents, as well as to our 20 wholesale customer communities in Saginaw County and portions of Bay and Tuscola Counties. In 2023, our Water Treatment Division treated and delivered 6.4 billion gallons of drinking water and

performed thousands of quality tests to ensure your drinking water is safe. But with the age of some of our infrastructure, we knew investment in the future would be necessary to continue providing high-quality drinking water. In the fall of 2022, we announced \$15 million in federal funds awarded to the City of Saginaw to fund an elevated water storage project. We are completing the design and permitting stage for the elevated tower with plans to begin construction at the site located on Webber just west of Washington Avenue, with site work anticipated to start in the spring of 2024. This new tower will ensure that the City is able to maintain future compliance and greatly increase reliability of the City's overall water system.

We've made changes in every area of our operations and it's having a big impact throughout our city. In 2023, the HR team negotiated a new Healthcare Program with retirees that substantially reduced not only annual costs but significantly reduced Retiree Healthcare Unfunded Liability for the city. Our HR team also successfully applied for and received \$38 million from the MI Pension Grant to help with the city's underfunded Defined Benefit Plans. And like every organization and institution in America, we have faced enormous staffing issues since the COVID pandemic. Our HR team has worked hard to fill these vacancies and attract talented individuals to work for the City of Saginaw. Through their efforts, the HR team has reduced job vacancies by 75% since the COVID pandemic.

With 3 elections in Michigan in 2024, this year will be a year of major decisions on the national, state, and local level. We realize the magnitude and significance of these elections and I can assure you that our City Clerk's office has been diligent in preparing for the changes to this year's election. Our clerk's office is working hard to educate residents on these changes, including the new option of early in-person voting up to nine days before the election day. Along with increased training and preparation in

the Clerk's office, we've worked to ensure every precinct is equipped with the necessary technology to enhance voting accuracy and increased ballot security, and to reduce wait time.

Throughout 2023, there were a lot of FRESH, new enhancements taking place at our Fire Department. The Fire Department continues to upgrade its fleet and training operations to ensure the highest level of fire safety in every home in our city. These upgrades include a new 100-foot aerial ladder truck expected to be delivered this spring and a new fire engine for Station number 2 on Gratiot, which will be delivered within the next 12 months. Our Fire Department recently trained and certified 8 new fire inspectors to serve the City and surrounding communities and integrated with the County Emergency Support Team to provide fire suppression, rescue, and special operations services during EST incidents.

We're working for you, Saginaw, in a fresh, new way. But, as your mayor and a City Council member for 10 years, I do acknowledge that we face many challenges here in Saginaw.

Like every city in this nation, Saginaw must fight harder than ever to overcome rising crime and violence in our city. I can assure you that the safety of our citizens continues to be a key priority for all members of the City Council. Our Police Department remains focused on preventing and solving crimes and prosecuting offenders. This is made possible due to our strong partnerships with Michigan State Police, County Sheriff's Office, Department of Corrections, and the Saginaw County Prosecutor's Office. In 2023, our Police Department welcomed 5 new recruits to the Police Department. We also welcomed 3 new officers to the Saginaw Police K9 unit. The addition of these 3 K-9s takes us to a total of 5 K-9 officers. The contributions our

K-9 unit brings to our force are immeasurable, and all our new officers are a huge benefit for the department and the citizens of our city.

It will require all of us working together, collaborating, and creating impactful solutions, to move our city forward. The senseless and tragic violence that occurred in our city over the past year has been devastating for the entire community. We all experience the impact of these traumatic events.

Last summer, I began meeting with local community leaders to address the root causes of gun violence in our community. We formed a coalition dedicated to HEALING-ENGAGEMENT-LOVE—and-PREVENTION. H.E.L.P. The H.E.L.P. Community Violence Intervention Initiative was created with a goal is to identify and put forward a long-term solution to prevent the gun violence on our streets and in our neighborhoods.

I, along with other community leaders such as Pastor Kareem Bowen, who serves as the President of H.E.L.P., are taking pro-active steps to engage with young adults and parents and ensure we have role models in our schools. In less than 6 months since the formation of HELP, we have grown from 10 to 55 community members with street credibility who have volunteered to work our youth and young adults. These 55 and others are providing our youth with 3 things: access, opportunity, and exposure to a more positive and productive future. They are providing them with options for educational advancement and avenues for professional and personal growth and development. My hope is that this group that has been formed will continue to work together to share information and ideas that will build a safer Saginaw.

In 2023, we made a concerted effort to do more to battle blight and illegal dumping in our city. We've recently restructured Code Enforcement/SCENIC Division, adding

key positions to assist property and business owners, promote business development, and unify our neighborhoods. Over the past year, we approved the addition of an Environmental Enforcement Officer to enhance our efforts to diminish blight and clean up the debris in our city. In 2023, we were able to host two 'Team Up to Clean Up' events in the City. These events are a communitywide effort to clean up litter and debris in various locations throughout the City. I'm always amazed at the turnout from our residents for these events and I want to thank the hundreds of citizens, neighborhood groups, and organizations that have faithfully volunteered and supported these events, along with our SCENIC Division and our Environmental Enforcement Officer who helped plan and organize the events.

There is a fresh anointing in our city. It's a season of enlargement and transformation. There's a change. It truly is a season of power, Saginaw.

It's clear to see that we are a city experiencing growth and development, and I'm thrilled to see the changes that are taking place in our city. I attended MANY ribbon cutting celebrations this year, and each one is significant. It's a sign that our future is about growth.

In 2024, we will complete our recertification from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation as a Redevelopment Ready Community. Saginaw is one of only 69 communities in the state of Michigan, certified by the MEDC as Redevelopment Ready. This certification verifies that we are ready to work hand in hand with developers as they complete their projects through a streamlined permit and oversight process that will strengthen interest in our community as a great place for investment.

Last year, our Planning and Development Department assisted with numerous projects throughout the City of Saginaw to promote economic development,



including the sale of the former Jefferson Apartment Building, which is slated to be rehabilitated to become a 40-unit market rate apartment development. In 2024, this team will continue the work to prepare locations such as the Bearinger Building and the former TRW site to aid future development.

Our development partners at Saginaw Future worked on 20 projects in the City of Saginaw that generated 302 new jobs with a total investment of more than \$31 million. There were 12 expansions and 8 attractions or new business start-ups that led to more than 173,000 sq. ft. of new construction or renovations.

The most exciting development news came in July of this past year, when the Michigan legislature passed the fiscal year 2023/2024 budget to provide \$30.3 million in funding for Saginaw's Medical Diamond project. This is a once in a generation opportunity to build upon the growing medical cluster in the City of Saginaw and the interest and commitment to the City's riverfront. The project has been a collaborative effort between the City of Saginaw, County of Saginaw, Saginaw Future Inc., the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce, and many others. The Saginaw City Council and the Saginaw County Board of Commissioners have each approved \$5 million in ARPA funding to support related health care initiatives and the overall development.

When complete, the new development will span 3 blocks in downtown Saginaw along Washington Avenue and will include a new College of Medicine for Central Michigan University, which may allow CMU to combine all four years of their medical education program here in Saginaw. The new development also includes a possible public health and mental health building and a mixed-use development consisting of residential condominiums, hotel, public health and professional services, retail, and various commercial spaces for lease.

Not only is this development transformative from an economic development perspective, but it supports our vision to have comprehensive medical education and increased healthcare access for our citizens. We are fortunate to have healthcare providers such as Covenant Healthcare, Ascension St. Mary's, and Great Lakes Bay Health in our region. They are leaders in the health care industry and do an outstanding job in providing treatment for the Great Lakes Bay region. However, we know we still have many in our community who are not getting the health care they require. The Medical Diamond Project will help fill the void in our community and set Saginaw apart, not only in this region but throughout the state, as a leader in health care. This new Medical Diamond project will increase access to care, improve health outcomes, and address community-wide chronic health issues.

The City of Saginaw is managing the planning process for the Medical Diamond development and has partnered with Studio Gang design firm and architects to oversee the design phase of this project. The project has a 5-year timeline and is slated for completion in 2029. When completed, there is no doubt that this project will bring increased private investment into the downtown corridor, as well as create additional jobs for this region. This truly is a once in a generation opportunity that will transform our downtown corridor and set Saginaw apart as one of the top healthcare hubs in the State of Michigan behind only Southeast Michigan and Grand Rapids.

To each investor who believed in our city and our vision—I want to say thank you. And I want to thank Saginaw Future and all our development partners who have contributed to the business growth and development in our city. The investment and expansion Saginaw is experiencing is a tribute to working together and finding innovative ways to highlight the benefits of our city and promote development.

I also want to highlight the work of the Saginaw Economic Development Corporation in 2023. Over the past year, the SEDC has provided small business owners with numerous opportunities for networking, education, expansion, and investment. In 2023, the SEDC developed the Economic Development Initiative (EDI) program to benefit small businesses located in the city. Through the EDI program, we were able to assist 27 small businesses. This past August, the SEDC celebrated the 10th anniversary of their Small Business Expo with a remarkable outdoor event at the SVRC Marketplace outdoor pavilion. Nearly 500 citizens visited our downtown marketplace for the event, allowing local business owners to showcase their unique products and services, connect with our citizens and with other local business owners from the Saginaw community. I want to thank the SEDC staff and board members for their efforts to assist our small businesses, pushing them forward to the next level in business and creating growth in the city.

Fresh anointing IS flowing our way. It IS a season of power and prosperity.

When I say prosperity, we must think about the true definition of prosperity. I believe that true and sustainable prosperity is shared prosperity. True prosperity is the ability to use the power you've been given to meet the needs of others.

We understood the transformative power that has been granted to the City through American Rescue Plan Act funds. We as a council knew we had the opportunity to deliver rapid-response aid while also pursuing bold, longer-term initiatives to unravel deep inequities in our community.

In 2023, we allocated over \$19 million from the ARPA Revenue Replacement Fund to support critical city infrastructure projects that affect the community at large. Council also approved the final expenditure focus areas of Youth and Development and Workforce Development. In 2023, we also began the critical task of working with the

subrecipient organizations to ensure all expenditures are within ARPA spending and obligation deadlines.

One of the most impactful uses of ARPA funds has been the City's ARPA Home Rehabilitation Program. We have now allocated \$7 million in ARPA funds to provide home rehabilitation assistance to qualified applicants. Phase I, which includes furnace replacements, began in the late fall of 2022. Since the program was launched, we have worked with nearly 300 homeowners to provide rehabilitation assistance for their homes. To date, we have completed the installation of furnaces in 222 homes.

Phase II, roof replacements, was rolled out in April 2023. At the end of 2023, 182 applications have been approved and awarded for the roof replacement program.

In September, Council reallocated an additional \$4 million in ARPA funding for the Home Rehab Program, taking the total to \$7 million for this valuable program. This additional \$4 million in funding will allow us to provide additional furnace and roof replacements for our residents and launch Phase III of the program, which involves Window Replacements, starting this spring.

The Saginaw Home Rehabilitation Program will provide Saginaw residents with the opportunity to stay in their homes, as well as preserve the viability of these homes in the future. This is but one tool in the toolbox to ensure we can provide affordable housing opportunities for our community. This assistance is essential to our mission to make Saginaw an inclusive, safe, and vibrant community in which to live, work, learn, and play. I want to thank our dedicated staff who have worked over and above their regular duties to rollout this program and make this home rehabilitation process possible.

As we enter 2024, we understand that these final months to review current allocations and disburse any remaining ARPA funds are critical. This funding is far too important to mishandle, and the consequences of misuse could be detrimental and set the city back in numerous ways. Throughout 2024, we will account for every dollar spent by our subrecipients and ensure all expenditures are within ARPA spending and obligation deadlines.

I remain confident that our best days are ahead of us. This doesn't mean there won't be challenging or difficult decisions to make in this new year but I'm more confident that the progress we've witnessed in 2023, and the steps we are taking in 2024, will help ensure that we are on the right path to a prosperous future and that we have positioned ourselves to successfully travel that path.

In the spring of 2023, it was announced that Saginaw would be the home of the 2024 Canadian Hockey League's Memorial Cup Tournament from May 24 through June 2, right here at the Dow Event Center. The 10-day CHL championship tournament is like the Super Bowl of junior league hockey and is expected to bring thousands of hockey fans and spectators to the Saginaw area, along with an estimated \$25 million in business opportunity to the Great Lakes Bay Region.

We need to realize the significance of hosting this 104-year tradition. In the history of the Memorial Cup, there have only been 3 other cities in the United States selected to host this historic event. Cities such as Seattle Washington, Portland Oregon, and Spokane Washington. And now Saginaw, Michigan is on that list! We need to be proud of that fact. But now, the work begins. Saginaw will be in the international spotlight, and we want to be ready for our visitors. We need to get ready, Saginaw. We have company coming!

As soon as this exciting news was announced, the City immediately got to work, meeting with various groups and organizations like the team here at the Dow, the Saginaw Spirit, Great Lakes Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau and others to prepare for this event. The City is doing all it can to support their efforts to prepare for this monumental event. Some of the exciting upgrades include:

Henry Marsh Mural Project—an initiative of the Great Lakes Bay Convention and Visitor’s Bureau. This new plaza is a tribute to former Mayor Henry Marsh and will provide space for outdoor exhibits and activities, as well as increase access to the Saginaw River and nearby trails.

Symphony Lane—this exciting new project near the Dow Event Center will serve as an outdoor event venue for entertainment, food trucks, and other community gatherings. Like our other city parks, you will now be able to rent this space for private events and celebrations.

We will also see the completion of the exciting Riverfront Gateway project, an initiative of the Riverfront Development Commission that will provide enhanced lighting, seating, and new landscaping along Saginaw’s riverfront. Friends of Hoyt Park is also completing improvements at Hoyt Park, which include pavilion upgrades, new playground equipment, and new signage at this historic park.

Businesses such as STARS Transport are expanding and revising operations for the Memorial Cup event. STARS has revised their schedule for certain routes during the event and is offering FREE service to ensure everyone has transportation to and from downtown for all the exciting activities.

The City is also planning additional clean-up efforts throughout the city, including additional road work and road repairs and additional clean up events planned for this

spring as this event draws near. It's going to take a team to get our city ready, so be sure to visit our website or follow us on Facebook for more information on how you can help with the clean-up efforts.

We also want to make sure we are providing support to our small businesses and local organizations. Our B Planning and Development staff is doing all it can to help our local business owners prepare for and benefit from the increased tourism. In December, we held 2 Memorial Cup Informational Sessions to allow local business owners and organizations to learn more about the 2024 Memorial Cup Event and how they can plan, prepare, and benefit from this increased tourism. I want to encourage all our local business owners if you haven't already, please get in touch with our Planning and Economic Development team to learn more about the Memorial Cup and how you can be prepared for this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Even if you are not a local business owner, I can assure you there are hundreds of ways you can support this event and get involved. I'm going to highlight the Great Lakes Bay Convention and Visitor Bureau's special website dedicated to this event.

Believe me, there will be something for everyone during these 10 days, even if you're not a hockey fan. Visit this page to learn more about the scheduled activities and ways you can volunteer to support this event.

Friends, we need to stop and understand the significance of this event. When you have nearly \$25 million coming into your region in 10 short days, you need to be prepared—you need to make some changes.

This event is more than transactional, it must be transformative. While we are in this national and international spotlight, we must do all we can to make the 2024 Memorial Cup Event a success. But, along with that, all of us should be absolutely

determined to see this work make a lasting transformation in our community. Where will be when the Memorial Cup Event is over?

This goes beyond hockey. These changes are for us—and the generations that will follow. My hope is that these changes, big and small, will have a lasting impact both now and for the future Saginaw.

Long after the Memorial Cup is completed, long after we are all gone—long after the little dramas and conflicts of our day have faded from memory—our work will speak for us. Our legacy will be what we have built. In order to build the Saginaw we all dream of—it's going to take time, energy, and commitment from our citizens. It's going to take a lot of love.

As we enter 2024, let's bear this in mind. There are battles to fight and robust debates still to be had. But let's never lose sight of the fact that we're partners in a common effort. I often think about the fact that I'm just passing through this role as your mayor. I will serve here for a relatively short period of time, but my hope is that my leadership and assistance on the progress we have made over the past few years and the plans we have for 2024 might be fruitful for the thousands of Saginaw citizens who will come after us. My daily prayer for myself and this city is that we let love motivate our work. If we can do that, I have no doubt that 150 years from now, our work will still speak for us.

I'll end with this—as I do with all my State of the City speeches. I want to encourage you to go out of your way to love. We need to return to that. Let's show a little extra love to one another and to our city.

In front of you on your table is a new decal from our City of Saginaw Marketing Team. This decal is an image of the hand painted 7 giant letters that are now on display in



front of the Andersen Enrichment Center and were part of the Summer Art Initiative in 2019. I encourage all of you to take one of these—display it on your vehicle, store front window, your phone, your iPad, your coffee cup. These decals are available at City Hall if you need a few more. Let's show our love for our city and display this with pride.

We are building Saginaw—all of us together. As I said in the beginning, let's stop complaining. Let's be a part of the solution. Let's focus on what we are doing and how we can do it better. What happens to us as a city—whether we move forward or not—depends on the amount of trust we have in each other and the pride that we have in our city. This is your city, and it's my city. I'm proud to be your mayor and I'm proud to call Saginaw my home. My hope is that you share that same love.

**Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the City and County of Saginaw, Michigan.**