



CITY OF HARVARD

**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**

**Michael P. Kelly**

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The 2018 State of the City of Harvard

The State of the City is an opportunity for celebration of the City's recent successes, a time to acknowledge the challenges we face, and a way to provide our community with additional transparency with a better understanding of the goals & strategies that the City Council has fostered to shape the future of Harvard. This Administration's agenda is focused on enhancing our community, creating an atmosphere to encourage economic development, seeking ways to update infrastructure, and facing our challenges head on. Our City Council has embraced this agenda and has embarked on several initiatives which begin to lay the foundation for strong economic growth for our City while striving for a new vision for our City's future. I am proud to say that the State of our fair City is strong, and our long-term future is Bright.

In the short time this Administration has been entrusted to take the lead, our City Council has accomplished some amazing things. I would like to highlight some of those accomplishments and share the Vision for Harvard's Future. We are on the precipice of exciting times where Harvard will gracefully transform from a diamond in the rough into a shining Jewel of McHenry County in the years to come.

Harvard's rural nature has always been a blessing in many ways to our community. However; it also creates some significant challenges we must acknowledge and tackle for our City to advance. Situated in the far northwest corner of McHenry County without a major highway and being somewhat remotely located from many services is an ongoing challenge.

An area that our isolation contributes to and is wholly underserved in our community is the area of Behavioral Health.

Behavior Health is a challenging issue for our society overall but for Harvard residents who must travel long distances to connect with service providers. Consequently, many residents were unable to connect with needed services due to transportation issues. The lack of services is taxing on our community and our Police Department's resources in particular. This is because our societal way of dealing with these challenges has been to engage law enforcement. Recognizing the need for local services, the City was able to work with Association for Individual Development (AID) to institute weekly Behavioral Health Services for the first time in Harvard. Partnering with Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, AID provides a weekly clinic right here in



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Harvard and is working to expand those services for our residents. If you or a loved one needs these types of services, I encourage you to contact AID for help.

No community is immune to the devastating individual and societal harms caused by substance addiction. The proliferation of opioid abuse continues to be a battle for our society to overcome and despite all attempts; it hits every community in our County and State, including the City of Harvard. The Harvard Police Department participates in a substance abuse program entitled "A Way Out". "A Way Out" requires individuals who are seeking help with confronting and overcoming substance addictions to voluntarily reach out to law enforcement. Harvard Police Department will transport the individual seeking help to professional treatment. Since its inception about a year ago, more than 100 McHenry County residents have participated in the program including residents of Harvard. I am thankful that when an individual is ready to ask for help, we have created the pathway to connect them with the resources they need to help them overcome their addictions.

Additional health and dental services came to Harvard in the last year. Mercyhealth continues to serve our community with distinction. They are the first and only critical access hospital to be certified as an Acute Stroke Ready Hospital. Additionally, the Mercyhealth Care Center was named the best Nursing Home having received an overall five-star quality rating from the federal centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. They have maintained this five-star rating performance for the last 5 years. Also, Harvard Community Health Center located on Ayer Street expanded and now offers dental services in addition to medical services for our community. Lastly, Shepard Premier Senior Living, LLC took over the former Harvard Retirement Home, bringing additional senior quality care to Harvard.

An important area of growth in the last year has been in our commercial sector. Residents seek the ability and convenience to have choices for purchasing products and services close to home. It is enlightening to recognize that business owners continue to invest in Harvard. In the last year, we saw Dollar General open their doors to provide an additional choice for consumers. Other New Businesses which have invested in Harvard in the last year are: Bunk's Restaurant, Joe's Small Engine Repair, La Cocina de Emma, Izzy's Attic, Sister's Donuts (which took over the former Harvard Donuts), The Battery Guy, Inc. expanded to Harvard, Baymont Inn and Suites, a part of the Wyndham Hotels Brands, completely renovated the former Heritage Inn. Other businesses expanded in the last year including Cardinal Tap Liquor, which opening their Tap Room; Angelo's Pizza expanded their restaurant operation; Starline continues to add new studio spaces for our ever-growing cluster of artists and artisans.



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2018 promises to bring additional new retail business to Harvard, as Culver's announced they would be building a store this Summer, Jay's Lanes is expanding by offering party room space, and other businesses that have yet to make their formal announcements are doing their due diligence in making plans to open in Harvard later this year.

In our industrial sector, Pound Bakery completed construction of their ~\$27M expansion and are now manufacturing in the new plant. This was a significant win and brought many additional jobs to Harvard. The construction also brought IDOT investment to Harvard expanding Potawatomi Way in the Arrowhead Industrial Park and providing additional needed infrastructure to support attracting additional industrial companies to build in Harvard. Custom Window Accents completed construction on a smaller of two planned expansions and has increased their workforce from less than 10 to nearly 40 employees. Rush Creek Distillery has opened with much fanfare, recently went into distribution, and will be a major draw for tourist activity to Harvard. The City Council approved rezoning 20617 McGuire Rd to M1 for a period of 10 years to permit Consolidated Materials to begin gravel pit mining operations beginning in 2018 at the Merryman Gravel Pit. The Harvard Economic Development Corporation continues to market Harvard and has created a new Strategic Plan to drive economic development in all sectors, but especially in our industrial sector. Lastly, the current owner of the former Motorola Plant, which was been renamed Edwards Village after the owner Edward Gong; is seeking to lease or sell the plant after spending the last year updating the property. Despite rumor, the property is in very good condition and is ready for immediate occupancy. The City is poised to help facilitate in any way possible to bring development to the property.

Residents should be informed that the State of Illinois granted the City of Harvard an "Enterprise Zone" which is the only such zone in McHenry County. The Zone provides significant property tax abatement and other incentives for businesses which choose to build or expand in Harvard. This is a significant carrot to help bring new business to our community. It allows a business to establish itself and gain profitability for 4 years before it is required to pay real estate taxes. After 4 years, the business will begin contributing to the property tax base, which will help reduce the burden on all other property tax payers. The Harvard Economic Development Corporation is actively helping to publicize these incentives and help attract new economic development to our community.

Another possible incentive that the City has applied for is a new Federal Treasury Program called Opportunity Zones. The program permits each State to have a percentage of qualifying tracts of land which meet low mean income standards based on the National Census data as



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designated Opportunity Zones. In McHenry County, Chemung Township is one of the tracts which meet the criteria for designation. Governor Rauner has until late April 2018 to make his nominations and Harvard has a high likelihood to gain the nomination for several reasons which makes it more attractive over other tracts in urban Chicago or the suburbs of St. Louis. Once nominated and declared an Opportunity Zone, it will open the Zone for significant investment dollars where investors are able to take advantage of incredible Capital Gains Tax advantages in newly formulated Opportunity Zone Funds. The Funds will provide low cost loan funding for economic development in the designated Opportunity Zones and should Harvard gain the distinction, will be poised to benefit from significant investment.

The City received a generous gift of approximately 8 acres of prime commercial property with US Rt. 14 frontage on the north side of the City. The property is located just north of Northfield Avenue, behind the Shell Gas Station, Harvard State Bank Group (Harvard Savings Bank), and Dollar General and has frontage on US Rt. 14 just north of and adjacent to Dollar General. The City has created and published a Request for Proposal for development of the land with an emphasis on a full-service grocery store, although other types of development will be considered. Developers have until June 2018 to submit their proposals to the City Council. The City Council will then consider all proposals and seek to negotiate the development with the selected proposal that is best suited for Harvard. We are hopeful this will bring some new commercial growth to the northern area of our City.

Another important area for Harvard's successful future is sparking growth of our residential sector. In the last several years, only 4 new houses have been built within the City of Harvard. 3 of those houses were built through the Harvard High School's Trades Program. The Northwest Herald recently highlighted the need for affordable \$200K housing in McHenry County. Harvard has a unique opportunity to create a housing boom with the right forces at work. Attracting more businesses and industrial growth will require growth in our residential sector. Therefore, in the last year, the Harvard City Council took an important step to attract residential growth by reducing the City's permitting and impact fees for new residential building to the lowest levels in all of McHenry County. The strategy is producing significant interest from builders who are close to committing to build new single-family homes in Harvard residential subdivisions where improved lots are ready to be built upon. There is a very high likelihood that they will begin building in Harvard this year. Increasing the number of residential homes will help increase our tax base, which means we will have more homes over which to spread our property tax burden and in turn will reduce your share of the levied property tax.



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The City recognizes it will take a community effort to attract new residents. This includes providing the community with amenities like excellent park space and recreational programming. The City Council placed a referendum on the Primary Ballot in March which Voters passed. The passed referendum will provide an additional revenue stream for the City's Library and Parks Funds, permitting them to carry out their respective capital improvement plans in the coming years. The revenue stream will become available in 2019. This is an important step to reshaping our Parks and Recreation Department in the coming years, ensures the proper maintenance of our Library Building, and will enhance these important assets for current and future residents.

The City hired a new Parks & Recreation Superintendent and restructured the Parks and Recreation organization to place new emphasis on better management of our Parks and Pool resources. He will create new and ongoing Recreational Programming for the benefit of our residents and foster a cooperative spirit with other organizations within our community including Harvard's School District 50.

The Harvard School District 50 will also play an important role in attracting future families to our community. This administration is dedicated to working closely with District 50 officials and the District 50 School Board to align our goals for serving our community. We have met with the new School Administration on several occasions and are seeking ways to strengthen and enhance each of our respective missions of serving our community.

The City Council has taken bold new steps to create and begin funding a much needed and overdue Capital Improvement Plan. City Staff provided a survey of the City's needs and the City Council then prioritized these needs for future implementation as funding becomes available. In the coming year, the City Council will host a Strategic Planning Workshop to create specific strategies to accomplish some additional lofty goals for areas which need addressing within the scope of the City's future vision.

The City Council closed out what is likely one of only a few, if not the first and only successful TIF Districts in McHenry County. The city returned the excess funds which were collected by the TIF to the County for redistribution to all the applicable taxing authorities. The City Council has earmarked the City's portion of these funds and upon redistribution back to the City, they will become the initial funding source for a new Sidewalk Replacement Program.



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The City took the next step to creating a more complete water supply system by extending the existing water main in the Arrowhead Industrial Park across West Diggins Street and into Milky Way Park. The next step we will take this year is to connect this extension to Well #10 located in Milky Way Park. The connection will provide an additional loop in our water supply system and eliminates a dead head water main. Additional water main extensions are planned in the future.

A significant issue the City must address is the future is our Waste Water Treatment Plant. The Plant is near the end of its useful life and the technology utilized is a failed technology that needs to be replaced. Additionally, to attract new industrial business, we will need the extra capacity that our current plant cannot provide. The project will be a \$15M-\$20M total cost to complete. The large price tag is too much for water users to bear alone. Therefore, the City Council is working to fund the project using multiple funding sources. This Administration and City Staff traveled to Washington, DC to meet with our Senators, US Representative, and their Staff, along with various Federal Agencies paving the way for sourcing Federal Grant money with the help of our Federal Lobbyists. These much-needed Grants, along with low interest rate Federal Loans, commercial loans, and Cash on Hand will help to keep user fee increases as low as possible. Nonetheless, it is still necessary to increase water user fees to help pay for the new plant. Users will see a rate increase beginning in May 2018, with rate increases in May 2019, and May 2020 as we begin to save additional capital for this looming project. Even with these fee increases; Harvard Water Rates will remain in the middle of the pack when comparing water usage rates to neighboring municipalities. The City also took the first step towards building a new plant, by purchasing the property at 805 and 807 West Brink Street which neighbors the current WWTP location. Moving the plant to this property will move the plant outside of the 100 year flood plain.

The new Administration mandated City Hall to become more proactive in communication with our community. The City has therefore created a new social media presence and is embracing and beginning to utilize new technologies in the digital age. City Hall will be implementing a new Enterprise Software system which will permit water customers to access their water accounts on line to better manage their accounts with the ability to view their usage and payment history and pay bills online. Users will be able to go paperless and receive their bills by email. Mailed bills will change from the current small card, to an 8.5x11 paper bill mailed in an envelope. The new 8.5x11 format will permit the City to include additional City and community information like Brush Pick up, e-Cycling events, parks and recreation programming, and other important information.



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The City created an entirely newly designed website. Residents can sign up for email notifications of Parks Programming, and the soon to be created City Newsletter. The Harvard Police Department created Front Line on the City's new website. Front Line allows residents to register their property for Vacation Watch, notify the City about non-emergency issues, and make all manner of suggestions to City Hall.

Our current Police Station seriously needs addressing. The building was built in the 1950's by the Harvard Moose Lodge. The City purchased the building in the 1970's. The building is dilapidating and floods with every heavy rain. Repairing the building would not be a cost effective use of tax payers' money to repair all of the issues which need to be addressed. Consequently, the City is planning to build a new police station in the northwest parking lot of City Hall located on West Diggins Street. The new building will be designed for policing, providing adequate office space for Command Staff and officers, interrogation, records storage, custody protocol, secured evidence storage, a holding cell, officer training, and a sally port entrance for secure transfer of persons in custody. The City has created an initial site plan with architectural plans to be created in the coming year. Ground breaking has not yet been finalized but the City is seeking to break ground for the new police station within the next 4 years. The City is seeking additional grant funding to help with this project which will affect how fast we are able to proceed.

An additional new strategy the City has embarked on is to engage and encourage tourism and attracting visitors to our City from near and far. Increasing our visitor-based economy is a strategy that will help Harvard in many ways. Attracting visitors which spend their money in Harvard supports Harvard based businesses, creates jobs, and increases sales tax revenues that supports our community. Businesses like those in the Starline Building, Rush Creek Distillery, and events like Milk Days, Harvard Balloon Fest, and new in 2018; the Harvard Truck Festival, bring outside dollars to our community. These businesses and events have demonstrated visitors will come to Harvard if they have a reason to do so. Last year, for the first time, the City became a municipal member of Visit McHenry, which is the Official Visitors Bureau of McHenry County. Visit McHenry County now helps market the City of Harvard to visitors outside of McHenry County. A future Vision of Harvard's downtown Ayer Street is to create a Visitor and Tourist district with boutiques, restaurants, galleries, specialty shops, and an established Farmers Market to attract even more visitors to our City. Once the new Police Station is built, the Vision includes creating a public-private partnership to build a multi-story hotel on the site of the current police station. This site would benefit from the close proximity to



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the Metra Rail, and could help support the ever-increasing artistic activities, weddings, and events being held at the Starline Building. The City could then create a marketing campaign that targets the Northwest Suburbs and Chicago to use the Metra Rail as a way to come and visit Harvard for the weekend. Additionally, thousands of potential visitors pass by 5 points every weekend in the warm weather months on their way to the Lake Geneva area. Revitalizing Ayer Street with businesses that will attract those motorists to spend a few hours in downtown Harvard should be our goal. Additional hotel space in Harvard could also be an attractive alternative for those seeking a place to stay when planning a visit to the Lake Geneva area. Marketing Harvard as a gateway to the Lake Geneva Resort area and fostering additional visitor and tourist type activities within Harvard will help support building a strong Visitor Based Economy here.

Our City's Code Enforcement is having a positive influence on our Community. Residential builders which I mentioned earlier specifically cited that Harvard has an enormous aesthetic appeal by strong enforcement of City codes as compared to other communities under consideration. There are still some problem areas within the community which the City is working on ways to address. Recently, the City applied for and was selected for a grant to help demolish some distressed properties within the City. Additionally, the City is partnering with McHenry County in creating a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS) which will encompass the area of the City of Harvard within the boundaries of W. Diggins Street to the North, Division Street to the East, W. Brink Street to the South, and Lawrence Road to the West. The NRS Area will provide a target area for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to bring revitalization for economic development including but not limited to facade improvements, micro-enterprise loans, housing repairs, direct client service programs, and more. The City will be creating an Advisory Committee in the months of May to July, with the committee commencing its meetings in August. The committee will spend 6 months deliberating and forming a strategy for the NRS. The resulting consolidated plan will begin in October 2020, with a 4-year implementation. Additionally, the City of Harvard already has a revolving loan program which provides interest free loans to businesses in the downtown area to update their building facades. Businesses can borrow up to \$50,000 towards a project.

The City Code Enforcement continues to focus on ensuring our community meets minimum aesthetics and ensures a safe environment for our residents and businesses. Code Enforcement will be taking on a new initiative. City Staff will be creating the initiative which recognizes property owners that take pride in their homes and go above and beyond to beautify



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Harvard. This new recognition program will award decorative plaques which can be affixed to the home and identify the property and recognize the owner for their hard work and dedication to their neighborhood. The program should help encourage creating the curb appeal that will foster community spirit and enhance Harvard as a great place to live with neighbors who take pride in their neighborhoods.

There is a huge desire to create additional curb appeal by updating and installing sidewalks and curbs, as well as creating a comprehensive street resurfacing program. The problem remains how to generate the revenue stream to pay for such an expensive program. The funding the City currently receives for resurfacing is limited to our portion of the Motor Fuel Tax. The funding only provides enough revenue to resurface approximately ¼ of a mile of City Streets and leaves nothing to address sidewalks. Utilizing only Motor Fuel Tax will not permit us to address these infrastructure needs. There are two programs available at our disposal which would help generate the revenue to address our streets and sidewalks and transform.

One program would be to implement a Vehicle City Sticker. I am advising not to consider this as an option. There are some significant drawbacks to such a program. The program is expensive to implement and manage. It incentivizes people to register their vehicles outside of the City to bypass the fees. It taxes our Police Force by requiring them to enforce compliance. It places the entire financial burden upon the residents of Harvard.

A better solution would be to implement an increase in our Sales Tax. This would require the voters to pass a referendum because Harvard is not a Home Rule City. It is a better solution because visitors to Harvard would help support the tax burden and given the strategy of increasing our visitor-based economy, the more visitors which come to Harvard, the more they will help subsidize the infrastructure. For residents, it will be easier to pay a small sales tax on every day purchases than to write a large check for a City Vehicle Sticker. Depending upon the size of the sales tax increase, such an implementation could mean that all of the streets of Harvard could be resurfaced within a 10-year period. If we continue to fund our streets with only the Motor Fuel Tax revenue, it will take more than 80 years to pave all the streets of Harvard. Since pavement would not last 80 years, continuing our current path means streets will continue to degrade faster than we can keep up with resurfacing requirements.

Recognizing that the City's demographics has evolved over time such that nearly half of Harvard's residents are now Latino, the City embarked on a new mandate to providing information in both English and Spanish. All Meeting Agendas and Minutes are now posted in



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English and Spanish. A new website was created that permits translation into multiple languages, including Spanish. The City increased the number of Bi-Lingual staff in the last year to better serve our diverse community. Alderman Meza helped coordinate the first ever Latino Town Hall where the current Administration and our Chief of Police met with many Latino residents to discuss issues and provide a positive outreach to this part of our community. Embracing our cultural differences and uniting our community will enhance our quality of life and build a stronger Harvard for all.

The City intends to embrace the idea of a stronger united community by building a new Cultural Center. The Center will be built in the parking lot just west of City Hall. The building will be a multi-functional building which will be used to provide needed space for several new initiatives. The City will partner with McHenry County College and local businesses to provide job training and needed skills training to residents needed to support local businesses employment needs. Our Partnership with MCC will be enhanced as the building will provide additional space for a remote campus to conduct additional courses in Harvard, including ESL and other right here in Harvard, reducing transportation requirements needed to get to the MCC campus in Crystal Lake. A First Time Homebuyer Program is in the works which will connect first time homebuyers with resources to buy their first home. The new Cultural Center will also be the new home for City Council Chambers for City Council Meetings.

In 2016, with the help of a generous grant from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the City Council created a new Comprehensive Land Use Plan which is available for review on the City's website. Part of this Plan called for a changing of the City's Zoning Map and updating the City's Unified Development Ordinance to bring them in line with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. CMAP recognizing the need to do these updates, provided the City with an additional grant to accomplish. A steering committee comprised of City Elected Officials; City Staff; Business Leaders; and Citizens at large; along with the help of Camiros, a planning and zoning consulting firm; embarked on the months long process to create these important documents. They are now in draft form, posted to the City's website for public review, and the City has scheduled an open house for members of the community to review on May 9<sup>th</sup> at City Hall. The Unified Development Ordinance will help to better preserve, strengthen, and protect the historic patterns of development that define the character of our City, work to direct investment to targeted areas, and create new opportunities for economic development. The new Ordinance will make Harvard a more sustainable, livable, and business-friendly community.



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Another project which the City has identified as a need is to create a new streetscape for US Rt. 14 from Rt. 23 to Brink Street. US Rt. 14 is the front door to our community and it needs an update. This area has been built up over the last 50 years with no real comprehensive plan for aesthetics. The result is a hodgepodge of signage, no sidewalks, and no cohesive streetscape. In the last year, with help from the HEDC, the City has reached out to all the major property owners with the vision to create a streetscape similar to Downtown Ayer Street. The project would cost approximately \$10M to complete. It would bring sidewalks, new water mains, underground electrical wiring, new storm and waste sewers, and street lighting to create a welcoming and aesthetically pleasing entrance into the City of Harvard. This a long-range project with lower priority, but it is on the list which supports the Vision for Harvard's future.

I am excited to serve our community and I look forward to helping empower our City to reach for the stars. Our City is full of community minded people who are our City's strongest asset. I hope you will join with me as we roll up our sleeves and get to work on building a brighter future. Harvard has a strong network of businesses and neighbors that embrace and support each other, foster a spirit of cooperation, and create a community that we are all proud to be a part of. I repeat, the State of the City of Harvard is Strong, and our long-term Future is Bright.