

**State of the City Remarks Cambridge City Manager Louis A. DePasquale
April 27, 2022**

Good evening.

Mayor Siddiqui, Councillors, distinguished guests, and fellow residents - and of course, my wife Cheryl - thank you for being here.

This will be my last State of the City Address as I am retiring in July. I was sworn in as City Manager in 2016 and have worked for the City for over 45 years.

I have had the privilege to work with so many incredible City employees during my career.

Their dedication and passion are second to none, which has never been more evident than during the COVID-19 Pandemic. We owe city employees a debt of gratitude for their efforts to keep our community safe and ensure that the City continued to provide services and programs critical to our community. I want to personally thank each employee for the work you do every day and for your commitment to making Cambridge the best city that it can be.

The past two years have been unprecedented times for local governments, and I am proud of how City, the City Council, and our community have worked together to slow the spread of the virus, get vaccinated, and support each other in so many different ways.

The City has thoughtfully approached the Pandemic through collaboration and partnership with our community and regional partners.

We have launched and maintained initiatives to aid Cambridge residents, businesses, and nonprofits through the COVID-19 Pandemic.

I will not describe all of efforts undertaken tonight but we have made enormous strides as a community, and we have access to the tools needed to protect ourselves and our community.

Over 93% of our residents have had at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and 77% are fully vaccinated.

We have built the necessary public health, communications, testing, and vaccine infrastructure that will allow us to scale operations quickly to meet any emerging need in Cambridge.

Our police, fire, and emergency services are second to none, and I cannot thank our public safety staff for their commitment and service to the residents and city. I want to give a special thanks to Chief Mahoney and the members of the Cambridge Fire

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Department who worked tirelessly with ProEMS and Public Health to provide free PCR testing and free vaccines and boosters to people who live or work in Cambridge to help keep our community safe from COVID-19.

I also want to thank our amazing community partners that have assisted us throughout the Pandemic. Especially, Cambridgeside, Trinity Properties, St. Johns the Evangelist Church, St Paul AME, Reservoir Church, Harvard University, MIT, the City's COVID-19 Expert Advisory Panel, the Cambridge Health Alliance, and Cambridge Redevelopment Authority. These are just a few of the business, educational, faith, and nonprofit partners who played an essential part in supporting our community.

When COVID-19 was first emerging in our region, our Public Health Department, Police Department, Public Works Department, and Department of Human Service Programs quickly developed a plan to build and open a temporary emergency homeless shelter and quarantine facility at the War Memorial.

This shelter has since evolved into a new transition wellness center for unhoused residents at the Spaulding Rehabilitation Center.

I especially want to recognize former Chief Public Health Officer Claude Jacob and former Police Commissioner Dr. Branville Bard, Jr. Well before the State provided guidance, they began advocating for the creation of a COVID-19 support system for our unhoused community, including quarantine and isolations facilities. I want to thank our current Chief Public Health Officer Derrick Neal, Commissioner Christine Elow, and Assistant City Manager Ellen Semonoff for their continued leadership on issues impacting our unhoused community.

And of course, I need to thank Dr. Assad Sayah, our Commissioner of Public Health, who has been a critical partner and advisor to me and the City on all issues related to COVID-19. Assad, thank you for your partnership and friendship.

Because of the City's collaborative team, we have:

- Administered over 275,000 free COVID-19 tests through our Community PCR Testing Program;
- Distributed approximately 90,000 rapid antigen tests;
- Provided over 16,000 vaccines and booster shots through City and public health run clinics;
- Supported families in applying for COVID-19 related relief and connecting to city and community services; and
- Provided culturally appropriate outreach around COVID updates, testing and vaccination in multiple languages.

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These are just a few highlights of the types of support the City has provided our residents.

And, of course, we must remember and acknowledge the loss that families across the world and in Cambridge have experienced.

We have not stopped as a city, even in the midst of the Pandemic. We have added over 40 new full-time positions to the budget between FY21 and FY23, demonstrating the City's commitment to important goals and priorities and highlighting the importance of our fiscal policies and practices.

The City's practice of working to maintain sufficient reserves, closely monitoring revenues and expenditures, and carefully managing budget growth is directly related to our ability to effectively address the COVID 19 crisis and continue to expand programs and implement new initiatives while also maintaining fiscal stability and a certain level of predictability.

Maintaining the City's unique and notable distinction of achieving AAA ratings from each of the major credit rating agencies reaffirms our fiscal approach and puts us in a strong position to continue to support major new initiatives and investments.

I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished over the years.

The collaboration among staff, City Council and the community have resulted in Operating and Capital Budgets that represent our values and priorities, such as:

- The purchase of approximately 4 acres of open space from the Buckingham Browne and Nichols School.
- Investment in environmental initiatives and infrastructure, including municipal building sustainability and improvement projects; water and sewer system upgrades; an expanded tree canopy; major transportation corridor and street safety improvements; and implementation of the Bicycle Network Plan.
- Expanded investment in services and initiatives for our residents including increased school funding; expanded early education and human service programs; funding and services to support our unhoused community; funding for innovations in public safety; and investments in improving equity and inclusion efforts both within the City and throughout the community.
- Commitment to increasing operational and capital funding for the Cambridge Public Schools and investing over \$500 million for 3 new school complexes.
- Introducing property taxes as a funding source for affordable housing. This was part of a commitment to significantly increase City funding to address the affordable housing crisis. Since FY20, and through FY23, the City has budgeted \$40 million in property tax revenue to support the Affordable Housing Trust.

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- Using 25% of Building Permit revenue as a source of funding for affordable housing which, when combined with Community Preservation Act funds, has also resulted in significant increases in funding over the past several years.
- The City has provided over \$278 million to the Affordable Housing Trust to create and preserve affordable housing in Cambridge, including \$34.5 million specifically to help preserve the affordability of over 500 units of housing at Fresh Pond Apartments.

It is important that a healthy balance between residential and commercial development continues so that we can ensure new revenues for affordable housing efforts and maintain affordable homeowners' real estate taxes, especially for many of our longtime senior residents.

Approximately 15% of our total housing stock is affordable housing subject to long-term deed restrictions.

No City in the Commonwealth is as committed to affordable housing as Cambridge is.

In addition to creating and preserving affordable housing, the City Manager's Housing Liaison, in collaboration with CDD and DHSP, works to respond to housing concerns and crises reported by residents.

Staff this year responded to more than 300 individuals who sought information on many housing related situations.

90 residents were assisted with on-going intensive case management from the Housing Stabilization Advocate, 25 received a deeper level of support and were assisted with successfully securing new permanent affordable housing, while others were able to maintain their current housing because of services and interventions provided by staff.

Housing Liaison staff also implemented proactive initiatives to inform residents of services and resources and prevent concerns from becoming a crisis. This included the Housed IN Cambridge Information to Open Doors Campaign that was launched in April 2021.

The City's longstanding commitment to our affordable housing efforts, and the use of other strategies to advance our housing goals, has helped thousands of residents with some amazing results.

Much has been accomplished, but there is more to do.

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Our City's success is a direct result of the strong and dedicated team we have to carry out the policy initiatives of the City Council and the day-to-day operations that deliver the high-quality City services our community expects.

Excellent customer service has always been a top priority of mine.

I believe that the role of government is to help all people, especially individuals and families in our community that are the most at-risk. This is a responsibility that my administration has taken seriously.

However, I also know that the City cannot solve every problem or provide every service on its own. Cambridge is fortunate to have incredible community partners.

To all our faith leaders, nonprofit leaders, university partners, business community, and volunteers who make our community so amazing: thank you. You're not just our neighbors, you are our partners.

I want to thank my City Manager's Advisory Committee.

This group was formed in 2017 and has helped me think through numerous solutions to address critical challenges facing the city. Their advice and support have been invaluable to me.

I believe that providing excellent service requires that we are reaching residents whom we do not traditionally interact with.

We want all residents to know what services and programs the City offers, how they can take advantage of them, and how they can be involved in the City's decision-making processes.

Delivering quality and responsive services to the public begins with having a trained and skilled workforce.

We believe our leaders and managers are responsible for creating environments that support Anti-racism, Equity, and Inclusion for all employees and residents.

Through our Comprehensive Learning Plan and our Anti-racism, Equity, and Inclusion initiative, we are providing our staff with the resources and skills they need.

I have issued Leadership Expectations, and we have created a new Strategy Filter to ensure key decisions are aligned with our values.

Additionally, we are implementing the recommendations in our workforce plan on Recruitment, Hiring, and Promotion.

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These are just a few examples of how we are building staff capacity to best serve our residents, maintain a welcoming and inclusive workplace, and lead and mentor a diverse workforce.

I am proud of how our City departments work together to provide the services that matter to the community.

For example, over the past year through multi-departmental collaborations, we have:

- Created a new outdoor dining policy to aid our small businesses;
- Worked on cannabis business permitting, which has led to the first cannabis business opening in Cambridge;
- Proposed amendments to the Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance;
- Launched a Disparity Study on City Purchasing with businesses owned by minorities, women, and veterans;
- Expanded innovative programs to help address rodent issues on public and private properties in the city;
- Completed the River Street redesign plans and preparations are underway for construction to begin in summer 2022;
- Broke ground on the construction of the Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper Schools complex;
- Completed significant open space projects at Glacken Field, the O'Connell Library Pocket Park, Timothy J. Tommey, Jr. Park, and Louis A. DePasquale Universal Design Playground;
- Enhanced scholarships for low-income children, expanded college courses for Cambridge based early childhood teachers, and began funding Head Start for full-day full-year care; and
- Launched a 21st Century Broadband initiative to conduct a feasibility study to help the City achieve its digital equity connectivity and Municipal Broadband goals. This yearlong initiative is well underway.

As a result of the close collaboration between departments, the City advanced it's What Works Cities Certification to the gold level in 2021.

This national standard of excellence evaluates how cities are managed and how city leaders incorporate data and evidence in their decision-making. Cambridge is one of only 14 cities to achieve gold level certification.

Transportation is a key element of what makes Cambridge a vibrant and lively city, and we are dedicated to taking the steps necessary to eliminate all traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

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Consistent with our commitment to Vision Zero, we continue to move forward with efforts to make our streets safer for all users—particularly those who are most vulnerable, such as pedestrians and cyclists.

We are committed to the timely implementation of the City's Bicycle Network Plan as required in the Cycling Safety Ordinance adopted by the City Council.

We will continue to consider input from all stakeholders in the community as the requirements in the ordinance are carried out by our departments.

This year, staff created a new traffic crash open dataset to increase transparency and provide timely and detailed information related to crashes in our city.

Another important area where we are working hard to improve outcomes is sustainability.

During FY22, the City of Cambridge collaborated with Biodiversity for a Livable Climate and the SUE-GEE Project to establish a 4,000 square foot Miyawaki [ME-A-WALK-E] microforest at Danehy Park. This type of micro forest offers an opportunity to reestablish healthy forests in urban environments.

As part of a long-term strategy to reduce flooding, the City has constructed 12 underground stormwater storage systems over the last 20 years.

Collectively, these facilities can hold over 2 million gallons of stormwater. The value of this infrastructure was on display during the first 2 weeks of FY22, which saw over 9 inches of rain, making it the second wettest period since 1921. Before installing these stormwater systems, such heavy rain would have caused significant flooding in The Port, Baldwin, and Mid-Cambridge neighborhoods, and this did not occur.

The Resilient Cambridge Plan, released in July 2021, is based on the idea that Cambridge is built for the climate of the past and that it must adapt to the shifting climate of the future.

The 34 strategies in the plan aim to increase physical and social resilience through four categories of actions: Closer Neighborhoods, Better Buildings, Stronger Infrastructure, and Greener City.

Cambridge is also collaborating on climate change issues regionally through the 15-member Metro Mayors Climate Change Task Force, the Resilient Mystic Collaborative involving 19 of the 21 Mystic River watershed communities, and the Charles River Climate Compact.

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In terms of Climate Resilience Zoning, based on a task force report completed earlier this year, staff are preparing a zoning petition that will be presented to Council later this year.

Additionally, the Community Development Department is working to increase access to EV charging infrastructure in residential areas, and 4 electric vehicle charging stations will be installed in 2022 to help ensure equitable distribution and access to chargers.

With the world-class institutions of higher education and the science and tech businesses located in our City, we want to do everything we can to ensure that all young people, particularly our underserved students, are prepared to take advantage of the incredible opportunities in their home city.

We continue to build upon the City's current STEAM Initiative to enhance and expand students' access to quality learning experiences from birth to adulthood. This initiative is a collaboration among the Department of Human Services, the Library, and the Cambridge Public Schools.

We have seen how our STEAM programs are opening pathways to opportunities for Cambridge residents.

As part of the City's commitment to STEAM, the state-of-the-art Hive makerspace opened at the Main Library in July 2021, and 900 members of the community have taken their first class.

Other ways the City supports our residents is through programs offered by the Community Learning Center.

The Department of Human Service Programs' college success coaches also help students transitioning to Bunker Hill Community College and UMass Boston manage stress and their studies.

DHSP also provided summer in-person or remote jobs to over 750 youth, and school year internships to over 250 youth.

In addition, the Next UP internship program for 18-25 year olds is supporting more young people with their career plans.

In March 2021, the Cambridge Public Library hired its first Licensed Clinical Social Worker to be a bridge between patrons and other agencies in the City.

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To support community access to critical library services, we have been rolling out a plan to expand branch hours by adding over 50 hours of service per week across the library system, including increased Saturday hours and a pilot of Sunday summer hours at the Valente Branch.

During the summer of 2021, the Cambridge Summer Food Program provided lunches to all Cambridge children ages 18 and younger, regardless of family income, at 9 school-based sites throughout the city.

Additionally, the program provided dinners at DHSP's Youth Basketball Leagues and at public housing developments, in partnership with the Book Bike's distribution of free books through the Agenda for Children Literacy Initiative, the Center for Families and the family markets offered by Food for Free.

I am proud of the City's long history of supporting our Small Businesses and the City over the past year has been looking for additional ways to support this critical and vibrant part of our local economy.

In FY22, we provided \$4,625,000 million in direct aid to our local businesses; established a Black, Indigenous, People of Color Business Advisory Committee to provide guidance on improving programs and outreach for these businesses; and re-vamped the Business Diversity Directory into an interactive database that makes it even easier to find and support local businesses.

Last fiscal year, the City adopted the maximum personal property exemption allowed by law. This \$10,000 exemption provided 1,200 small businesses relief from paying personal property taxes.

For FY22, the exemption amount increased to \$20,000, doubling the personal property exemption.

Retail zoning updates have allowed new businesses to come to Cambridge, such as a new dispensary in Central Square, which also provides a valuable pop-up retail space.

As City Manager, I have been fortunate to work with 3 highly collaborative Mayors: Mayor Siddiqui, and former Mayors Simmons and McGovern. Thank you for your leadership and partnership.

Without an open and honest partnership between the Mayor, City Council and the administration, we would not be the effective government that we are.

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Based on the goals and policy priorities of the City Council, I will submit my FY23 Operating and Capital Budgets to the City Council on Monday.

I encourage the public to follow the upcoming budget process that will take place over the next 2 months.

As you will see in the FY23 Budget, the City remains committed to expanding support for programs and initiatives related to housing; early childhood; community infrastructure; climate efforts; schools; small business community; equity and inclusion; transportation safety; and open space.

In addition, the city has received \$88.1 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds, and we have committed \$33 million to fund high priority projects around Homeless Housing/Shelters, Homeless Support, Testing Services, Outreach Programs, Mental Health Assistance, Job Training, Food Insecurity, Small Business Support, Broadband and Digital Equity Initiatives and Water infrastructure improvements.

And I am looking forward to an announcement that Mayor Siddiqui will be making related to ARPA funds during her remarks.

One critical program I am recommending in my FY23 budget submission is a new Community Safety Department.

This proposed Department, which is independent of the Cambridge Police Department, will coordinate community-driven solutions to enhance safety in the community with key services and programs targeted at our most vulnerable populations.

The Community Safety Department will be responsible for providing community services, focusing on behavioral health crisis response services and violence prevention and intervention.

These initiatives will be rooted in harm reduction and trauma-informed principles grounded in the belief that all people deserve respect, autonomy, dignity, and opportunity.

I want to thank the Cambridge Police Department for being a nationally recognized and respected leader in 21st-century policing. It was an honor for me to appoint Christine Elow as Commissioner of the Cambridge Police Department.

She is the first woman to lead the Department since its inception in 1859, and she has a bold vision for the continued transformation of our police department to enable it to best serve the needs of our community and be accountable to our residents.

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Finally, a State of the City address is an opportunity to celebrate accomplishments. But it is also an opportunity to bring the community together to reaffirm our core commitments to our residents.

During my first State of the City address in February 2017, I spoke about our status as a Sanctuary City. Today, our Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship holds immigration legal screening clinics with the De Novo Center for Justice and Healing, providing consultations to over 290 clients and groups from more than 70 foreign countries.

I want to be as clear tonight as I was in 2017; we are a Sanctuary City, and we will continue to support and promote the safety, health, and well-being of all our residents, regardless of immigration status.

Cambridge is and will remain committed to being a welcoming City for all.

As I have said before, our employees are the greatest asset of this City.

The past two years have clearly demonstrated that every City employee plays an essential role in our ability to carry out our goals and positively impact our residents' lives. Thank you again for your incredible efforts to improve the lives of our residents.

Mayor Siddiqui, I want personally thank you for your partnership over the past two years. We have been through a lot together, and I appreciate all the support you have shown me.

To the City Council, thank you for placing your trust and confidence in me and for providing me this opportunity.

As a lifelong resident of Cambridge, there has been no greater honor in my life than serving the city that I love.

With that, I say goodnight, and I look forward to hearing from Mayor Siddiqui.

Thank you.

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