

Mayor Ben Walsh Will
Work Every Day to Keep
Syracuse Rising

A Report on Progress
and Platform for the Future

PLAN
TO KEEP
RISING

FALL



2021



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Keep



Introduction

We Will Keep Rising: Building on a Foundation of Success

Despite the devastating impact of COVID-19 on communities, Syracuse is experiencing progress not seen in decades. Under Ben Walsh's leadership during the past four years, the City of Syracuse has experienced a resurgence.

Population and high school graduation are up. Poverty, crime and vacant housing are all down. Mayor Walsh's unwavering commitment to collaboration is solving intractable problems that eluded previous administrations:

- Municipal sidewalks
- Police residency
- STEAM School at Central Tech
- City street light network
- Deer management
- Sales tax agreements
- Interstate 81

In his first winter in office, Mayor Walsh even brought back sledding to city parks. Mayor Walsh's decisive and collaborative style of leadership has guided our City through the COVID-19 pandemic. Through Mayor Walsh's proactive and wise financial decision-making, Syracuse maintained fiscal stability during the pandemic and is now able to use American Rescue Plan pandemic relief funds to help city residents get

back on their feet and strengthen city government's resiliency.

Mayor Walsh is running for reelection to continue our remarkable progress, and he has a plan to do it. This "Plan to Keep Rising" shows how the Mayor will keep creating jobs; improving education; driving poverty down; turning back crime; and making neighborhoods stronger.

Within weeks of taking office, Ben Walsh assembled the most diverse administration in history and presented a vision for the City: "Syracuse will be a growing city that embraces diversity and creates opportunity for all." Jobs, crime, poverty, population and graduation data all show his vision is being achieved.

Rising

A Message from Mayor Ben Walsh

Our Grand Experiment is Working

Dear Friends and Neighbors,
My election in 2017 as the first independent mayor of Syracuse in over 100 years was powered by a broad and diverse coalition built on a "Rise Above" philosophy intended to bring our city together by setting aside partisan politics that too often drive us apart.

In the speech I gave in the grand ballroom of the newly restored Marriott Downtown Syracuse the night of the election I spoke of my administration as a "grand experiment" to test whether or not we can set aside partisan politics and work together to make policy that improves the lives of all our city's residents.

It's a chance to shed decades old pessimism and affinity for the status quo to embrace the innovative, big thinking, risk-taking, progressive approach that defines the great cities of the world. A way that will keep Syracuse rising because it is rooted in respect, listening, learning and collaboration.

I'm running for a second term because I am steadfastly committed to keep Syracuse rising by building on the foundation of successes established during my first term.

Despite the trials and tribulations of the pandemic Syracuse is standing strong in meeting the challenges we face and successfully acting on opportunities for growth. There is much to be optimistic about what lies ahead for Syracuse.

In these historically challenging times, I have often returned to the vision, values, and mission my team and I established for the city shortly after taking office in 2018: Syracuse will be a growing city that embraces diversity and creates opportunity for all.

The values, vision, and mission that we established early in 2018 included four strategic objectives that we identified to guide the resurgence of Syracuse.

- Increase economic investment and neighborhood stability.
- Deliver city services effectively, efficiently, and equitably.
- Achieve fiscal sustainability.
- Provide quality constituent engagement and response.

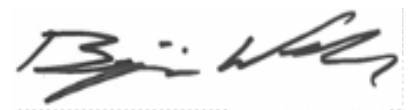
I'm running for a second term because I am steadfastly committed to keep Syracuse rising by building on the foundation of successes established during my first term. We have strong relationships at the neighborhood, local, state, and federal level, and I will use them to make Syracuse even better.

Syracuse continues to face daunting challenges. Chief among them is the COVID-19 pandemic, an emergency like no other faced in generations. It has had a devastating impact on people, families, businesses, and governments. It has also, though, revealed the resiliency of our City and the power of non-partisan cooperation. With collaboration and confidence there is truly no limit to what we can achieve.

I'm deeply grateful to the many people, community organizations, and businesses that enabled our successes during the first term. The results are not the work of City Hall, but rather of people working together in partnership to improve the quality of life for all. We will continue to work together to keep Syracuse rising.

If you have ideas or input, please email me at info@benwalshformayor.com. Thank you.

Sincerely,





Families, Children, and Neighborhoods

Housing

Mayor Walsh is making major progress on neighborhood stability through the Resurgent Neighborhoods Initiative (RNI), his comprehensive program for engaging neighbors in the revitalization of targeted neighborhoods and their surrounding business corridors. The RNI will build 200 units of new single, two-family, and multi-family homes in strategic neighborhood locations throughout Syracuse -- the most ambitious citywide construction of new housing in Syracuse in decades.

The RNI was slowed but not stopped by the pandemic. Mayor Walsh is directing \$21 million of American Rescue Plan funds to people facing housing challenges to make sure the RNI takes off in the months ahead.

- Complete 31 single family homes underway or soon to start
- Deploy \$14 million to build single & multifamily homes
- Provide \$7 million in grants and low interest loans for home improvements and first-time home buyers in the city

Mayor Walsh is also directing \$5 million in pandemic relief funds to fix up and remove vacant housing in the City. The Greater Syracuse Land Bank will deploy the funds beginning this fall.

Mayor Walsh is directing \$21 million of American Rescue Plan funds to people facing housing challenges to make sure the RNI takes off in the months ahead.

To assist renters and landlords through American Rescue Plan fund, Mayor Walsh is also proposing a \$1 million rent relief fund for tenants in need of assistance who have not qualified for prior pandemic aid.

Recognizing the significant housing challenges revealed by the pandemic and the changes occurring in the Syracuse market, Mayor Walsh is also proposing a comprehensive housing study to guide future housing investments that his administration will make.

Lead Remediation

Mayor Walsh worked with the Common Council to pass landmark legislation in July 2020 to protect city children from lead poisoning. In neighborhoods with high risk of lead contamination, the law

lets city code inspectors proactively inspect for lead contamination.

With American Rescue Plan relief, the Mayor is directing \$4.5 million to remediate lead in hundreds more properties and free more city children from the life-altering effects of lead poisoning. With federal and local help, Mayor Walsh will deploy another nearly \$9 million to address lead contamination in the home. With the new law and additional funding, the Walsh administration will keep finding and fixing lead threats while limiting the impact on property owners.

Poverty

Under Mayor Walsh's leadership and in partnership with Onondaga County and other community partners, poverty is beginning to decline in the City of Syracuse. According to U.S. Census Bureau data in 2019, poverty reached the lowest level in the City in a decade. While human services support is primarily delivered at the county level in New York State, Mayor Walsh has taken strong action at the city level.

In July 2019, Mayor Walsh launched the Syracuse Financial Empowerment Center, a free service that provides professional, 1 to 1 financial counseling. In collaboration with local non-profit partners and the "Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund," the program has assisted over 850 clients. In late August, Mayor Walsh announced the Syracuse FEC has helped families and individuals reduce debt by more than \$2 million and increase savings by \$1 million. The Syracuse FEC is one of the highest performing FEC's in the nation, and Mayor Walsh will continue investing in the program in a second term.

Reducing Poverty: Through the Syracuse Financial Empowerment Center, Mayor Walsh has helped 850 Syracuse families and individuals reduce debt by just over \$2 million and increase savings by \$1 million.

Families, Children, and Neighborhoods

Veterans

An often overlooked population in Syracuse with unique needs are the proud veterans who have honorably served the nation. Mayor Walsh asked Syracuse University's Institute of Veterans and Military Families to help.

Together, they launched SyracuseServes, a community-based collaborative and care-coordination center housed at the new National Veterans Resource Center. In a second term, Mayor Walsh and Syracuse University will build on this successful partnership and help more veterans and military families access the services they need and deserve.

Public Transportation

Limited access to reliable and affordable transportation is a barrier that keeps people who don't own cars from getting jobs and accessing vital services. Centro is operated by an independent state authority, but Mayor Walsh has gotten involved in public transportation like no previous mayor in decades.

He is making the introduction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) — which enables the benefits of light rail without the high cost — a top priority for his administration. Mayor Walsh has forcefully pushed for state and federal funding and is determined to deliver on BRT in the City of Syracuse based on the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council SMART1 plan. He's also proposed \$2.5 million in ARPA funding for traffic signal optimization to enable BRT and improve public safety.

ReZone

After many years of work and over a year-long delay in public engagement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the

Walsh Administration is working with the Common Council on the final phases of a new zoning ordinance. ReZone is the first extensive zoning update in over 100 years and will help drive growth and protect neighborhoods long into the future.

Mayor Walsh plans to present the completed plan to the Common Council for adoption before the close of 2021 to ensure the new ReZone guidelines drive growth and strong neighborhoods beginning early in his second term.

Sustainability

Mayor Walsh has improved the energy efficiency and sustainability of city government during his first terms. The acquisition of the City's street light network and conversion to energy saving LED lights is reducing more than 5,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually. During the past four years, the City has also completed energy efficiency improvements on city facilities and lighting that prevents the release of another nearly 300 tons of greenhouses gas annually.

In a second term, Mayor Walsh committed to conducting a full review and update of the Syracuse Sustainability Plan and the Comprehensive Plan 2040. The plans for sustainability and climate action were adopted nearly a decade

Under Mayor Walsh, we will have a fuller urban forest to fight climate change and create healthier neighborhoods for our children and families.

Before the end of 2021, Mayor Walsh will advance the Syracuse Urban Forest Master Plan to the Common Council for authorization. In a second term, Mayor Walsh will start planting more than 3,500 trees citywide, particularly in neighborhoods that are currently deprived of tree cover.

Mayor Walsh directed \$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to jumpstart the program in 2022. He will fund tree planting citywide and a tree maintenance and pruning program for trees across Syracuse. Under Mayor Walsh, we will have a fuller urban forest to fight climate change and create healthier neighborhoods for our children and families.

Mayor Walsh directed \$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to jumpstart Urban Forest tree planting in 2022.





Public Safety

Crime Reduction

Compared to the three year period prior to Mayor Walsh taking office, overall crime is down in the City of Syracuse by 6%. Despite an increase in violent crime, gun violence is down nearly 30% this year.

Under Mayor Walsh, the Syracuse Police Department (SPD) created special details to address neighborhood concerns, including dirt bikes and ATV's, fireworks, burglaries, speeding, and gun violence. SPD also partnered with the NYS Attorney General's office to hold the most successful gun buyback in program history, taking 342 guns off the streets.

Mayor Walsh continues to proactively address the police staffing challenges that are affecting police departments around the country. He has hired four police academy classes and, when reelected, will bring on a fifth class in January 2022.

Mayor Walsh achieved a change long sought by city residents. Beginning next year under a contract negotiated by the administration, new officers in the Syracuse Police Department will be required to live in the City of Syracuse.

Under Mayor Walsh, officers will be rewarded for fluency in another language, having military service, or having a college education.

Mayor Walsh is proposing to invest \$1 million dollars in ARPA funding for crime prevention and investigation technology, including tasers, ShotSpotter expansion and COPS street cameras.

In a second term, Mayor Walsh's top priority will be working with SPD and community partners to reduce violent crime.

Police Reform

In four years, Mayor Walsh has done more to strengthen police accountability and improve police-community relations than has been done over the past several decades combined. He showed his commitment to shaking up the status quo by bringing in a chief of police from outside of Syracuse. And as police reform rose nationally, he leaned in to accelerate progress.

In June 2020, Mayor Walsh enacted a 16-action Syracuse Police Reform Executive Order. He completed the full implementation of body-worn cameras and updated the department's Use of Force policy.

The Administration also developed a comprehensive Syracuse Police Reform and Reinvention plan which was unanimously passed by the Common Council in April 2021. A complete report on progress and actions that are coming next are online at ourcity.syr.gov.net/portfolio/reporting-progress-01.

Mayor Walsh is directing American Rescue Plan relief to "alternative policing strategies" to increase the role of qualified mental health professionals in police response to individuals in distress.

Police reform in the state and across the nation revealed the need for new ways for police to deal with individuals with addiction or mental health conditions. Mayor Walsh is directing American Rescue Plan relief to "alternative policing strategies" to better involve qualified mental health professionals in police response to individuals in distress. He is also directing American Rescue Plan funds to provide de-escalation training and tasers, an effective less lethal choice for officers.

Fire Safety

Upon taking office, Mayor Walsh named Michael Monds chief of the Syracuse Fire Department. Chief Monds was the first chief of color in SFD history and has quickly become recognized as one of the best fire chiefs in the United States.

In June 2021, the Syracuse Fire Department received the highest honor in firefighter safety from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. Out of more than 30,000 fire departments in the U.S., the Syracuse Fire Department became 1 of only 22 departments in history to receive the group's prestigious "Seal of Excellence."

The Fire Department played a critical role in the pandemic. In order to keep SFD at their best, Mayor Walsh is directing \$2 million in American Rescue Plan relief to building a new fire training facility for the department.



Education

SCSD graduation rates continue to rise. At 70.7%, the rate is up 6% since Mayor Walsh took office in 2018 and is the highest it's ever reached under the current NYS reporting system. In a second term, Mayor Walsh will ensure the City invests in giving our children the resources they need to thrive.

Under Mayor Walsh, more children are graduating from high school. The high school graduation rate is the highest it's been under the current reporting system.

Collaborating with the State, County and Syracuse City School District, Mayor Walsh will turn the old "Central Tech High School" into a regional science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) high school. It will provide superior STEAM education in a state-of-the-art downtown school.

As co-chair of the Joint Schools Construction Board, Mayor Walsh will launch work on Phase III of the sweeping

school improvement program. It includes 10 buildings in all four quadrants of the City for a projected cost of \$300 Million. The work builds on the nearly \$300 million in school renovations he has supervised since becoming Mayor.

Phase II:

- Bellevue Elementary School
- Syracuse STEM at Blodgett Middle School
- Ed Smith Pre-K-8 School
- Frazer Pre-K-8 School
- Grant Middle School
- Huntington Pre-K-8 School
- Corcoran High School
- PSLA at Fowler High School
- Henninger High School
- Danforth Middle School
- Clary Middle School
- Expeditionary Learning Middle School
- Nottingham High School

Phase III:

- Syracuse Latin Pre-K-8 School
- Nottingham High School (completion)
- Delaware Elementary School
- Seymour Elementary School
- Syracuse STEM at Blodgett Middle School (completion)
- Corcoran High School (completion)
- Roberts Pre-K-8 School
- Henninger High School (completion)
- Lincoln Middle School
- Webster Elementary School

Jobs & Economy

Syracuse Surge

When the Walsh Administration took office, Syracuse was known for aging infrastructure and fiscal peril. Under Mayor Walsh, Syracuse is recognized as one of America's top Smart Cities and is attracting attention and investment from the world's most respected companies.

The Syracuse Surge, introduced by the Mayor in January 2019, is indicative of the Administration's transformational approach to inclusive economic development. It is our plan for inclusive growth in the New Economy, and it is working.

In 2022, the first new major manufacturing plant in Syracuse in at least a half century will open. JMA Wireless will open a tech manufacturing plant for 5G wireless equipment off South Salina Street on the Southside Campus for the New Economy, an area designated for new investment by Mayor Walsh. He is working with JMA and local partners to ensure these accessible, living wage jobs go to city residents.

With help from the Advancing Cities program, Le Moyne College has hired a director for Erie 21, their program designed to improve math and computational skills for city school children. Thanks to the passion, energy and partnership of Le Moyne, more than 750 city school students a year benefit from Erie 21 and other Le Moyne programs for SCSD students.

Verizon Wireless made Syracuse the very first Upstate city to get 5G wireless because of this inclusive strategy. Verizon will complete installation of the citywide 5G in 2022 which began with underserved neighborhoods on the south and north sides.

At the Center City Innovation Hub, construction will begin in 2022 on the Tech Garden's \$12 million expansion of its downtown headquarters. It will include a tech incubator program for

entrepreneurs of color.

Across the street, TCG Player is hiring for hundreds of full-time, accessible, tech-related jobs. The new Salt City Market at Salina and Onondaga Streets is adding jobs and lively culture.

Mayor Walsh is directing more than \$824,000 in American Rescue Plan funds to fuel recovery through the Syracuse Surge. He will invest in an applied trades and manufacturing training center in the Southside Campus for the New Economy and expand training and job placement programs in high opportunity careers in construction, technology, and advanced manufacturing.

Smart City

Mayor Walsh is giving Syracuse a global competitive advantage as a leading Smart City. Under Mayor Walsh, Syracuse acquired its streetlight network from National Grid in 2019. The New York Power Authority (NYPA) named Syracuse New York's "Flagship Smart City." Working through the pandemic, the City converted the system to money-saving, energy efficient LED lights.

Using \$500,000 from NYPA, by the end of 2021 Syracuse will pilot smart city technologies, like sensors for illegal dumping and vacant properties; ice and snow detection on roads; and free Wi-Fi around community centers.



In 2022, the first new major manufacturing plant in Syracuse in at least a half century will open. JMA Wireless will open a tech manufacturing plant for 5G wireless equipment off South Salina Street in the heart of Mayor Walsh's Southside Campus for the New Economy.



Interstate 81

Community Grid

When Mayor Walsh took office in 2018, the Interstate 81 viaduct project was at a standstill. Disagreement over the alternatives for the project was causing delays. The Mayor's strong advocacy for the Community Grid and leadership with New York State broke the logjam in 2019 when the State declared the Community Grid its preferred alternative.

The New York State Department of Transportation expects to begin construction in 2022. Mayor Walsh is working with community partners to prepare for the massive project.

As the Grid is constructed, Mayor Walsh will protect the interests of the people who live closest to the highway as his highest priority. He has already asked the State to present alternative solutions for the roundabout proposed near Martin Luther King School. In a second term, he will make sure the City has a lead role in the Land Use Working Group being formed to ensure those living in the shadow of the viaduct stand to benefit the most from land made available through the project.

Mayor Walsh is directing \$1 million of APRA funds for community engagement, design work, and to coordinate land use and development along the existing I-81 corridor. He will hire an urban design master planner before the end of the year.

Syracuse Build

Mayor Walsh, with the help of many community stakeholders, has made major strides in preparing the community for the jobs the I-81 project will bring. Instead of waiting for the project to begin, he created Syracuse Build, a workforce preparation program, in 2018.

The Syracuse Build Pathways to Apprenticeship program graduated its first class of students heading for construction careers in late August, and Mayor Walsh announced a second class to start before the end of the year. In a second term, Mayor Walsh will expand job training programs for the I-81 project.

Big Table

With the assistance and expertise of the Urban Jobs Task Force, Mayor Walsh created the Interstate 81 Jobs Big Table in 2020. The project has created never before seen cooperation between community advocates, labor, business and government.

The Big Table is ensuring community wide coordination of hiring policy, job training, and public information so people have the ability to get jobs and careers on the project. In a second term, Mayor Walsh will expand job training programs for 81 and other local projects.



Infrastructure

Roads

The year before Mayor Walsh took office, the City reconstructed about four miles of roads. In 2020, he nearly quadrupled that number to 15 miles. In 2021, weather permitting, the Mayor expects to reconstruct about 24 miles thanks, in part, to a \$7 million increase in state transportation funds.

In Mayor Walsh's second term, the unprecedented increase in road reconstruction will expand.

In 2022, the City expects to complete the reconstruction of South Salina Street and State Street through downtown Syracuse, along with Warren Street, Clinton Street, Jefferson and Montgomery Streets. It will also complete the long awaited Dig Once project on Butternut Street on the north side and reconstruct West Genesee Street from downtown to the city line. The City will also complete a reconstruction and beautification project on East Colvin Street from State Street to Comstock.

By the end of this year, Mayor Walsh expects to reconstruct about 24 miles of roads — about six times the miles completed in the year before he took office.

In a second term, he will also continue the practice of partnering with Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council to complete annual data based assessments of every street in the City and post a map online. He'll keep adding speed humps for pedestrian safety, add more protected bike lanes, expand bike and scooter sharing and make other mobility improvements.

Sidewalks

After decades of inaction, Mayor Walsh took on sidewalks in his first term and achieved results. He created the City's first sidewalk snow removal program on streets with high pedestrian and vehicle traffic and those near schools, parks and shopping areas. He will build on that program in his second term.

Working with the Common Council in June 2021, Mayor Walsh introduced a municipal sidewalk maintenance program in the City — another first. He recently directed \$5 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to kickstart the program and before the end of this year, the Mayor expects to have reconstructed sections or full sidewalks over 25 miles of streets. In a second term, we will get to work on the remaining 400 miles and make Syracuse neighborhoods safer and more walkable.

Parks

Despite the fiscal crisis created by COVID-19, Mayor Walsh will continue to invest in our parks and ensure they serve residents in these challenging times. During the past four years, his Administration refurbished or constructed fitness stations or playgrounds at Lower Onondaga Park, Schiller Park, Burnet Park, McKinley Playground, Grace Massena Park and Thornden Park. New projects are starting soon at Onondaga Geddes, Norwood, Spirit of Jubilee and Higher Onondaga Park.

During the pandemic, he created Weekend Walks in the Parks for extra safe places to walk. He rallied the public to raise \$100,000 in less than two weeks to keep city pools open. When COVID restrictions canceled the annual Christmas Tree lighting in Clinton Square, he and his team created a live streamed 30 minute TV special to share the big moment with the community.

Mayor Walsh is directing nearly \$2 million in American Rescue Plan funds to park facilities investments. He has directed an additional \$2 million to plant and care for trees citywide which is described in the Sustainability section of this plan on p. (6).



Infrastructure

Water

A changing climate is stressing Skaneateles Lake, the source of Syracuse's water supply and vital resource to our region. Mayor Walsh has and will continue to increase intergovernmental cooperation to protect the Skaneateles Lake watershed. He is also making major investments in upgrading the city water infrastructure. In a second term, he will spend, at least, \$10 million in ARPA funds to upgrade pump stations and extend the water intake pipe in the lake. He will also continue working with partners on solutions to harmful algal blooms, including a test project using drones and techniques to identify and eliminate HABs.

Sanitation

Throughout the Department of Public Works, Mayor Walsh has invested in overhauling the aged fleet of trucks and equipment he inherited when he took office. He hired a full-time professional fleet manager to prioritize purchases and maintenance.

In 2022, the City will take delivery of six new sanitation vehicles to improve the reliability and effectiveness of trash and recycling pick up.

Mayor Walsh is directing \$1.5 million in American Rescue Plan funds to enable the purchase of covered trash and recycling carts for all Syracuse households to reduce trash and litter on city streets. The carts will work with semi-automated pick up arms to be introduced in a second term which will reduce strain and injuries to city sanitation workers.

Broadband

Mayor Walsh is working to bring broadband and wireless access to Syracuse neighborhoods.

Because of his acquisition of the street light network in 2019, the City will introduce free Wi-Fi at and around community centers citywide for residents who have limited or no access.

Mayor Walsh is also directing \$5 million in American Rescue Plan funds for broadband access to establish

wireless internet access for about 2,500 households. Among other options, the Mayor's administration is considering a plan with Syracuse technology company JMA Wireless to use a combination of fiber optic cable and wireless connectivity over Citizens Broadband Radio Service, an unlicensed radio spectrum. JMA launched a similar program in Tucson, Arizona.

City Website

Mayor Walsh took on an infrastructure challenge left untouched for 13 years -- a complete rebuild of the City of Syracuse website, www.syr.gov.net.

In August 2021, the Mayor launched a "beta" or preview version of the new site and is collecting community input.

In a second term, Mayor Walsh will complete the buildout of this critical piece of digital infrastructure, the City's online front door to the world and most efficient tool to make it easier and more convenient for people to do business with the City.



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