



**Mayor Martin J. Walsh  
State of the City Address  
January 13, 2015**

*As prepared for delivery*

Governor [**Charles**] **Baker** and Constitutional officers; members of the Legislature, the City Council, and our Federal delegation; service members and veterans; first responders; clergy and community leaders: welcome.

I want to thank my family who are here tonight, especially my mother Mary and brother John; Lorrie and Lauren; and Lorrie's grandmother Kay White.

To all the people of Boston and our region, present tonight or watching at home: good evening.

And to the people of Paris: our hearts and prayers are with you during this difficult time.

As we gather to reflect on the state of our city, let us begin by honoring the memory of great public servants who passed away in 2014.

Lieutenant **Edward Walsh** and Firefighter **Michael Kennedy**, brave firefighters, who made the ultimate sacrifice in the tragic fire on Beacon Street.

**Dennis "D.J." Simmonds**, a police officer and hero in the days after the Marathon bombing, who died at the Police Academy.

**Dawnn Jaffier**, an amazing youth worker who lost her life—like too many others—to an act of gun violence.

And **Tom Menino**, who gave so much in his two decades as Mayor.

Here with us tonight are Ed's wife Kristen; Michael's parents Kathy and Paul; D.J.'s parents Roxanne and Dennis; and Dawnn's parents Ian and Althea.

We will always remember your loved ones.

+++

We're here to talk about Boston's present, and Boston's future.

I'm pleased to report that the state of our city is strong and getting stronger. Our economy is flourishing, and many more people are working. We are protecting the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars; while delivering the best results ever in city services. City Hall is more representative of the people it serves than ever before.

The strength of this city comes from the people who live and work here: from Allston-Brighton to Hyde Park, and from Roslindale up to Beacon Hill. They are parents with big dreams for their children, and children whose dreams are even bigger. Young people just starting their careers. Seniors, celebrating the past and hoping for a secure future.

I'm also here to recognize our challenges and offer a plan to meet them. For too many of our neighbors quality schools, affordable housing, and a living wage remain out of reach. As Boston approaches its 400<sup>th</sup> birthday, our goal is a thriving, healthy, and innovative city for all; one community that is a global leader for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. My job as Mayor is not just to govern for the year or the moment, but to mark the way forward, and build for decades to come.

+++

Symphony Hall is the perfect place to convene. A 115-year-old concert hall, with the best acoustics anywhere: it's full of history, yet also innovation and change, just like our city. But I have to admit, sharing a stage with the greatest orchestra in the world ... let's just say I'm not here for my singing ability!

I'm still that same son of immigrants from Dorchester: blessed with a loving family and second chances. But every day brings some experience like this one: a new person or place that leaves me with an even deeper belief in what Boston is, and what Bostonians can do.

A year ago, I made a commitment to the people of this city to listen, to learn, to lead. That's what I do, every day, as I make decisions and take actions that move us forward.

Consider what we've achieved together in just one year.

We've made city leadership more fully representative of the people than ever before. We created the most diverse command staff in the Boston Police Department's history. With 8 chiefs of color, my cabinet is the most diverse ever in City Hall. And I'm not done yet.

We set new standards for fiscal management. In March, we secured Boston's first across-the-board triple-A bond ratings. We audited the BRA and Inspectional Services. And we launched reviews of seven more large city agencies, including the School Department.

We proved that bringing trust and respect to labor relations is not only the right thing to do, it's good for the City's budget. We avoided the costly battles of the past, to reach fair contracts with our firefighters, EMTs, superior detectives, superior officers, and librarians. We saved \$45 million in insurance costs, with other vital reforms. I am grateful to our teachers and other public employee unions for their partnership.

To all 18,000 women and men who labor each day for the City of Boston: we thank you. Together we improved performance on crucial city services, from the North End to West Roxbury. Our police officers took 1,061 guns off the streets—the most ever. Both violent crime and property crime have gone down. We paved more than 60 miles of roads and filled over 19,000 potholes—50% more than in 2013. We protected cyclists by putting side-guards on all city trucks. We made turnaround times for permits faster than ever. And after years and years of neglect, we fixed a broken animal shelter.

And our economy thrived. We saw \$4 billion of construction begin, including a record 4,000 new units of housing. In 2014, we approved nearly \$4 billion more in future development. And, I'm pleased to report great news on the job front: 25,000 more Bostonians went to work last year. It's the highest job growth since 2007, and it's lowered our unemployment rate to 5.2%.

I'm proud of what we've accomplished; but I'm far from satisfied. We have a lot of work to do. Our policy goals are aimed at the year 2030—Boston's 400<sup>th</sup> birthday. It's a year when we'll take pride in Boston's revolutionary history. But to match that pride with an even greater hope for our future, we must make serious progress now.

+++

This is the conversation that our Olympic bid advances. Our vision of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century, affordable, sustainable Games went up against our nation's greatest cities, and we won. Boston now competes against the world, as America's city. Whatever the outcome, Boston will prove itself a global leader. The whole world will soon know what we have always known: Boston is exceptional.

We'll take this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to talk about our city's future: in education, in housing, in transportation, and more. That's why the public process is the ultimate benefit. It's why I commit to you that we will hold transparent conversations on every impact in every neighborhood. When we talk about 2024, we'll be talking about what Boston needs today. And what Boston needs in 2030, 2040, and 2050.

+++

My plan for Boston's future begins in our schools—all of our schools. We've talked about fixing our schools for decades. Now, we're taking action.

2030 may seem a long way off. But consider this: the little girl who signed up for pre-school this week will be a high school graduate in 2030. Her life will tell a story of Boston's 21<sup>st</sup> century. So a Boston that is thriving, healthy, and innovative in its fifth century depends greatly on what we do for her right now.

Yes, we have some progress to celebrate—maybe more than other big cities. But families with school-age kids aren't celebrating. A lot of the time they see a great school—quite literally—as a prize in a lottery.

Think about that. In the city that established public education; a city with the greatest universities in the world; access to an excellent public school is seen as a lucky break. Meanwhile, more than 30% of our high school students don't graduate in 5 years. That is just not acceptable.

Next month, I will get the names of the final candidates for the next superintendent of the Boston Public Schools. Whomever is selected for this job, my message and orders will be clear: I am not satisfied. The Boston Public Schools can do much better for our kids. We have to do better. We will do better.

My administration is moving forward.

We are working with the BTU to ratify a plan to add 40 minutes of quality learning time--every day, for every student through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

We are expanding high-quality, full-day pre-kindergarten, with the goal of reaching every 4-year-old in the city.

We are re-designing our high schools around pathways to college and career. We tripled the size of the Success Boston college completion program. And tonight I'm excited to announce a new partnership with the global software company SAP to create a high-tech career pipeline from Charlestown High School to Bunker Hill Community College.

We've revamped the Boston School Committee: by appointing an early learning specialist and a special ed advocate; and two members who are parents of kids in our Boston Public Schools.

And there's still more to come. When I talk about building great schools—I mean it literally. Too many of Boston's aging schools don't meet the standards of 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning—or come anywhere close. So we are going to establish the city's first permanent school building program in many decades. We're drafting a 10-year Facilities Plan, to identify the needs in every neighborhood. And we're creating a Boston School Building Authority, to tap the funding sources our city has failed to secure in the past.

We began last year with a new STEM Academy for Roxbury. Our next projects will be Fenway's Boston Arts Academy and Quincy Upper School in Chinatown. I want to thank the parent councils at these schools. After enduring years of false starts, their dedication will pay off now, and for generations to come.

Finally, we know the opportunity gap begins outside the classroom. So our new Office of Financial Empowerment will launch a free child savings account program. Research shows that it's a building-block of opportunity.

To recap: that's a strong start; a full day's school; real pathways to college and career; a permanent building program; and a commitment to fighting poverty. And I'm just getting started. We will not be satisfied with anything short of success: for every child in every family, at every school in every community in our city.

+++

Boston is a city of revolutionary innovation. But in Boston we know that a revolution only succeeds when it galvanizes the whole community. We need to support our local talent and spread opportunity widely. So this year we're launching StartHub, a regional program to unify and bolster our startups. A full-time "startup czar" will help entrepreneurs grow businesses in Boston.

And that means all over Boston: from the Roxbury Innovation Center, our new startup incubator in the city's own Bruce Bolling building; to neighborhood innovation districts that will support entrepreneurship in every community.

Innovation is transforming City Hall as well. This year we are creating a Citywide Analytics Team, to bring the power of data to everything we do. We will upgrade the Mayor's hotline into a simpler and more effective 3-1-1 number. And we are launching more mobile apps, including one I can announce tonight. Soon, you won't have to fumble for quarters to pay the parking meter. You can download the ParkBoston app right now.

+++

As we build our online public square, we are devoting more care than ever to the physical landscape of our city. As I often say, everyone should take care of the sidewalk in front of their house—and their elderly neighbor's. But City Hall has to set the standard. So we will put out a call to re-imagine City Hall Plaza as the thriving, healthy, innovative space that it should be. It's time we showed real pride in our front yard.

Pride is what we've brought to Boston's world-class parks: making them cleaner, safer, more lively, and more accessible than ever. Last year we renovated 16 neighborhood gems: from a new tot lot at Billings Field in West Roxbury; to a soccer field in Lopresti Park in East Boston. Now 97% of Bostonians live within a 10-minute walk of a park—making us #1, nationwide, in access to parks.

Finally, we are launching Main Streets Makeovers. Starting with Bowdoin-Geneva in Dorchester and Grove Hall in Roxbury, we'll provide public space upgrades and extra help for small businesses. We are making every square inch of Boston thriving, healthy, and innovative for every resident of our city.

+++

I recognize that our success brings challenges. Demand for housing in Boston is at a historic high: putting prices and rents out of reach for too many. So we're acting now to meet this need. Guided by the groundbreaking new Housing Plan we unveiled in October:

-We're making \$20 million available for affordable housing.

-We're marking out transit corridors in South Boston and Jamaica Plain to create housing for middle-income families where it is needed most.

-After getting the first-ever census of off-campus student housing, we're asking our universities to build more dorms. I want to thank Emerson College for being the first to answer our call.

And there's more. I can announce tonight that we are preparing 250 city-owned parcels to create homes for low- and middle-income families.

And we're asking the State Legislature to help by passing two bills: one that creates tax incentives for middle-income housing; and another that requires the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to create homes for our low-income seniors.

+++

As a son whose mother lives in her own home: I know our seniors face special challenges making ends meet. Seniors at home right now in Mission Hill and in Mattapan are wondering if they'll have to choose this month between utilities and medications. Starting today, the Boston Water & Sewer Commission will boost the water discount for all senior and disabled homeowners to 30%. And I've asked all the utilities to follow suit.

+++

I want to talk for a moment about our ultimate housing crisis: homelessness. On October 8<sup>th</sup>, I had to make a very painful decision. The Long Island Bridge, after years of neglect, had to be shut down. That hit me hard. I knew the impact it would have: on people I have worked hard to help.

You see, Long Island has played an important role in my life. For years I drove out there, every other week, to share the message of recovery. For years in the State Legislature, I fought against wave after wave of budget cuts, to protect the shelters and detox programs people depend on. The

people and service providers who were disrupted by this move are not just statistics to me. I know them. I know their stories and their struggles. I have worked, in every way I know how, to help them.

We are committed to sheltering everyone, every night: no matter what issues they bring; no matter where they arrive from; no matter what. But people in trouble need more than a bed. They need a city that understands their struggles. That's why we are building real solutions, right now:

- We are opening a safe shelter, this week;
- We are connecting the services and the housing that are bridges to a new life;
- And we are building the nation's first Office of Recovery Services.

Nothing is more important to me than protecting our most vulnerable neighbors, whether the addicted or the homeless, our children or our seniors. I will always move swiftly to keep them safe. But that urgency has to be sustained: through the hard work it takes to turn a life around; and build lasting solutions. This isn't just policy to me. It's personal.

+++

At a time of great tension nationally, I was proud of Boston's response to the events in Ferguson and New York City. People shared their anguish and made their voices heard, in safety. For that, I commend the officers of the Boston Police Department ... and those who protested. And I thank leaders like Reverend Jeffrey Brown and Father Jack Ahearn; Commissioner William Evans; and Professor Charles Ogletree:  
for their insight and wisdom in helping guide my response.

I know from my own life that you can't move forward unless you reach out and deal honestly with the past. The truth is that when it comes to race and class, Boston has a lot of unfinished business. We must not be afraid to talk about it.

So this year, in partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation, we will convene a citywide conversation aimed at healing divisions that go back generations. Bostonians need to know that, at a deep level, we can depend on each other. And when we see injustice, we can and will speak up for each other.

When we do that, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. told us, "the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community."

Coming together as one community: that's our fundamental vision for a thriving, healthy, and innovative Boston. When I think about what that means, I think about all the people who inspired me in my first year as mayor.

People like **Tim Hall**, a 63-year-old U.S Army veteran who founded Roxbury Green Power. In June I was proud to name Tim a Greenovate Boston award winner, for turning environmental action into economic opportunity.

I think about **Beza Tadess** and **Nathan Han**, two remarkable young people. Three years after arriving from Ethiopia, Beza is a member of the National Honor Society at Madison Park High School, with a dream to become a pediatric oncologist. Nathan goes to Boston Latin School and won the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. Unfortunately he couldn't be here tonight. His father called and said he has to study for final exams!

I think about **Charles Corchero**, an engineer who became homeless after losing his job in the recession and his home to alcoholism. I met Charlie at the Pine Street Inn on Thanksgiving, and learned his story. The Inn helped him get into recovery and find permanent housing. Now he serves meals to others where he once was served himself.

I think about the Richard family, and all the Boston Marathon survivors, who reclaimed the finish line and rallied us around our city.

Finally, I think about the Boston firefighters I saw at Beacon Street on March 26. That night I watched as they battled the fire; and fought to get to **Ed Walsh** and **Michael Kennedy**. I watched as a stream of off-duty firefighters arrived in their own cars and trucks. I saw a determination on their faces I'll never forget. Later, I saw that same fierce loyalty as they carried out their fallen brother with their own hands.

As mayor, I've seen reflections of this character in every corner of our city. It's rooted in a certainty about who we are; what we are capable of; and how we stick together. It's a resilience that carries us through the hardest times and allows us to imagine and work for the brightest future together. It's how we'll meet our challenges. It's how we'll move forward together. It's how a nearly 400-year-old city becomes a thriving, healthy, and innovative leader of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, without forgetting for one second who we are and where we come from. Thank you, and may God Bless the City of Boston.