



Destination Dearborn

Dearborn 2025 State of the City Address delivered by Mayor Abdullah H. Hammoud

Good evening. Thank you all for joining this year's State of the City address.

I want to begin by expressing my sincere thanks to our City Council, City Clerk, our dedicated judges, and all the elected officials from Wayne County to Lansing to Washington, D.C., who represent Dearborn. Please stand and be recognized.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the directors of all our departments across the city and the 1,400 staff who work tirelessly to make the city work for our residents. Would all City of Dearborn staff please stand. Thank you!

Most importantly, I want to thank the residents of Dearborn—your voices, your passion, and your dedication to our city are what make our community strong.

And of course, I wouldn't be here without my family: my wife and inspiration, Dr. Fatima Beydoun. Thank you for your support, patience, and partnership throughout this time in office. I am so grateful for our daughters - the future of Dearborn.

As much as Dearborn has changed throughout the decades, so much of what makes it special has remained.

You heard phrases in that video that still ring true today:

Dearborn is a "Community of over 100,000 people from a wide variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, all living together, all carving out a quality of life for their families."

"Homeowners are proud of their neighborhoods."

"Dearborn is a desirable choice for businesses that want the best."

"Dearborn's restaurants feature a wide range of cultural foods and delicacies."

And above all, "Dearborn welcomes the challenge of change."

For generations, thousands of families like my own picked up a map, set their pens down on Dearborn, and marked it as "*the* destination", the place to be.

The Dearborn shown in that video is just about a decade before I was born. It's the Dearborn that welcomed my father from the South of Lebanon in the 1980s and the

version of the city that my mother knew in her childhood here in the South end.

It was a city that made a promise—a promise that if you come here, plant roots, work hard, and give back to your community, you too can achieve the American Dream.

Dearborn has transformed over the years, but that promise has carried through generations. And it is incumbent upon us to decide what Dearborn will promise tomorrow and every day after.

In my first State of the City address, I stood before you and outlined a vision for our city. We laid out priorities that were clear and urgent with the goal that every resident—whether here for generations or just arriving—feels at home in Dearborn.

And that's exactly what we're doing. Since assuming office, we have:

Championed innovation and modernization of City services.

Prioritized public safety and justice for all by lowering crime rates.

Made major investments in Dearborn families and small businesses to provide economic opportunity and mobility for everyone.

We've implemented a health-in-all-policies approach to make Dearborn greener and healthier.

And we strengthened civic engagement and democracy in our community by investing in our public institutions.

As responsible stewards of your tax dollars, we've done all of this work - and more - with a balanced budget since coming into office, and we're on course to pass a balanced budget again this May.

That's three structurally balanced budgets proposed for the first time in over two decades.

To achieve this, we've kept taxes steady; we now have the lowest tax rate since 2010.

What's more, if we stay on this path, it's expected that by 2035, we'll be able to offer Dearborn families an additional 10% millage rate reduction, a rate that has not been seen since 2009.

We've also been creative in how we bring money to the City, and we spend it wisely.

Since starting the Department of Philanthropy & Grants in 2022, we have brought in over \$120 million in grants to put towards dozens of City projects.

We're providing world-class services, programs, and events with fewer resources, tighter timelines, and more state and federal restrictions than the last three mayoral administrations. That's *real* government efficiency.

So tonight, my administration and I are excited to chart our ongoing vision for our hometown.

We are here to reflect on the progress we've made, to hold ourselves accountable to the promises we set, and to chart the path forward - together.

When we first took office, we envisioned our parks as a focal destination - a communal place where families can gather, children of all abilities can play, and neighbors can connect.

At our last State of the City address, we presented you with the idea and renderings for three new state-of-the-art parks located across the city. We put together an over \$30 million investment in our parks and green spaces at no additional cost to our residents.

Since then, in partnership with Wayne County leadership and our County Commissioner Sam Baydoun, we've celebrated the openings of PEACE Parks West and East in each of our downtown districts, and we are excited to cut the ribbon on PEACE Park South this summer.

Not long after we got to work on the PEACE Project, I met with a Dearborn advocate for families in the disability community. Mona Alaouie has dedicated her life to fighting for access, equity, and inclusion for children with disabilities and their families to ensure everyone receives a fair shot at life.

She also connected us with families like the Burns and the Saads, who have raised their families in Dearborn. The Burns family shared how they once had to travel to other cities just to find adaptive equipment for their son Andrew. The Saad family shared the difficulty of watching their daughter Fatima sit on the sidelines because playgrounds weren't built with her in mind.

Inspired by their stories, we connected with commissioners on our Dearborn Disability Concerns Commission to dream up three parks that would provide equal opportunity for play for all Dearborn residents.

Today, we are proud to announce that, by the summer of this year, every single family living in the city of Dearborn will be just 10 minutes away from an accessible playscape at Crowley, Lapeer, and Ford Woods Park.

Because here in Dearborn, we believe that families like the Burns and Saads should never have to sacrifice play or precious childhood memories simply because their child moves, plays, or experiences the world differently.

Please join me in thanking Mona, the Burns family, the Saad family, and all Dearborn families involved in this project for their work and advocacy. It is because of passionate residents like them that our city can become a more welcoming, accessible, and family-friendly place.

Enhancing and expanding our public spaces continues to be a top priority of this administration.

Libraries have always been gateways of knowledge, and in today's world, knowledge isn't always learned "by the book" —it's built with hands-on learning, through technology, with experiences that spark imagination and creativity.

Several years ago, when there were rumblings about closing another library in our community, my wife and I had just welcomed our daughter into the world, and like so many parents, we wanted to give her every opportunity to learn, explore, and grow.

My wife took us across Southeast Michigan to visit children's interactive learning spaces—museums, STEM centers, and educational hubs.

We walked through these spaces - such as the Michigan Science Center, the renovated library in Redford Township, and the STEM Center in Northville - and watched children build, create, and engage with the world of science, technology, and art.

At one point, my wife turned to me and asked, "Why can't Dearborn have something like this?"

That question stuck with me. Because, like most things, she was right.

Now, if you know anything about me by now, I love the opportunity to start a competition whenever and wherever possible. So, we set out to develop a children's center that would rival all the rest.

With the thought of our children in mind - and selfishly because I shouldn't have to drive 25 minutes to Northville every weekend for a family outing - we got to work on re-imagining what our public library could be.

I began calling directors of the centers we visited, asking about their programming, attendance numbers, and what it took to bring their visions to life. I toured their facilities again—this time with architects, educators, and community leaders—taking notes, asking questions, and learning everything one could about what makes these spaces thrive.

We wanted to create a community space where students can experiment with robotics, music, arts, and engineering. A place where young minds can tinker with circuits, explore 3D printing, and engage in hands-on science projects.

So I'm thrilled to present to you the future of Esper Library: the premier children's exploration center of Southeast Michigan.

The best part? All Dearborn families can visit and enjoy the center free of charge. Because cost and distance should never be limiting factors for our children's imagination.

Take that, Northville.

And after we finish Esper, our sights are set on transforming Bryant Library as well.

Now, public safety remains among our highest priorities, and we have taken bold steps to combat speeding, reckless driving, and other immediate public health threats.

Thanks to our dedicated police officers and leadership, crime rates have dropped significantly—in fact, several major crime categories have declined by double digits since 2023.

For the first time in two decades, our police department is fully funded and fully staffed. That means more officers on patrol, faster response times, and an even stronger commitment to proactive, community-driven policing.

Our approach is working—making Dearborn the second safest big city in Michigan—and you can bet we're vying for that number one spot.

But we know that statistics alone don't ease fears. While crime has gone down, reckless driving and speeding remain real threats to our families.

That's why we've taken a three-pronged approach to make our streets safer using the guiding principles of enforcement, education, and engineering.

When it comes to enforcement, our officers are cracking down harder than ever on reckless driving, issuing citations, and getting dangerous drivers off our roads.

By focusing on the enforcement of dangerous driving, our police department issued nearly 25,000 traffic citations in 2024, a 5% increase over the last year.

We're not only going after drivers. Our enforcement strategy is also targeting driving schools.

In March, we began issuing warnings to driving schools to crack down on passing unqualified and potentially dangerous drivers. Within two weeks of our action, the Secretary of State actually closed two of the driving schools that were reported to be certifying unqualified drivers.

When it comes to education, we've worked with the 19th District Court to bring back the Traffic School after a six-year hiatus. Drivers who receive traffic infractions for failing to

follow the rules of the road are now required to go back to school and relearn the basics.

We've also launched a public education initiative using our social media series Traffic Tuesdays to keep the community engaged and informed.

In addition to that, our police department is hosting teen driver education sessions this summer to help younger drivers sharpen their skills.

When it comes to engineering, we've been hard at work on a data-driven approach, utilizing accident and citation data.

We pursued an evidence-based pilot for speed humps, installing three sets near Hemlock, Levagood, and Lapeer parks. We installed speed monitors to track their impact and found speeding reduced by over 20% in those areas, and since then, we have seen 98% speed compliance by drivers in these zones.

Given the success of this pilot, we secured a \$1.5 million grant to address the public health issue of traffic safety.

With these dollars, this summer, we are doubling down on roadway safety with plans to install:

- 300 speed humps,
- 100 illuminated stop signs,
- 60 speed radar display signs,
- 40 illuminated one-way intersection signs,
- 20+ raised pedestrian cross walks,
- 12 school zone crossing signs,
- 5 flashing beacons,

And a partridge in a pear tree.

We're even re-engineering several roads to better protect our residents:

These include pursuing Dearborn's first-ever roundabout at Chase and Ruby because we know roundabouts reduce serious crashes by forcing drivers to slow down.

We will also be pursuing a full redesign of Schaefer and Prospect, one of the most dangerous left turns in the city.

These three steps - enforcement, education, and engineering - send a clear message: If you drive in Dearborn, you drive safely. No excuses. No exceptions.

A few weeks ago, Southeast Michigan got nearly 3 inches of rain. You may have noticed that while neighboring cities battled flash floods on their roads and in their basements, Dearborn *was not* under water.

Let's talk about how we made that happen:

While working on a multi-year study of our storm and sewer system, we weren't just waiting for the results. We got to work immediately, removing over 50 log jams across the Rouge River.

This lowered the water levels along the river by over one foot, increasing the river's capacity and allowing water to travel through Dearborn's section of the Rouge at a quicker rate, reducing the opportunity for flooding.

We're also building out a green infrastructure plan - from neighborhood bioswales to integrated water retention systems in parks and green spaces.

Along Morrow Circle, we converted 24 easements into environmentally friendly bioswales that absorb up to 40,000 gallons of water per storm. That's 40,000 fewer gallons of water on our streets and in your yards.

Our hope is to scale this initiative to at least 1,000 easements or 3% of homes in Dearborn, which would absorb at least a million gallons of additional rainwater per storm.

To date, we've already programmed over 25 million dollars to reduce the likelihood of flooding in our city, knowing that we need to do more.

Programming includes clearing out the Colson-Palmer line, a 12ft diameter pipe that is filled with debris and water, which has reduced its effectiveness.

40% of its capacity is out of service, and we're working to resolve this issue by adding an estimated 2.5 million gallons of storage to our capacity per rain event.

Lastly, thanks to a federal grant, we are also in the process of designing grade protection stations and flap gate structures to protect roughly 3,300 homes in East Dearborn.

In essence, we're adding giant backflow preventers to the main sanitary lines underground rather than individual homes, preventing backflow into people's basements.

In the coming months, you can expect to see our detailed plan outlining how we will address flooding and reduce the likelihood of basement backups for years to come.

We also know that de-industrialization will help reduce the risk of flooding long term, which is why we've acquired properties across our city to turn them from asphalt into green spaces.

Replacing pavement with green areas allows water to be absorbed naturally, easing pressure on our stormwater system and lowering the risk of future flooding.

And now, we're taking it a step further.

With the support of our Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib and State dollars, we've already brought in resources and aligned departments to build on this foundation.

We're reimagining one of the most heavily impacted corridors in our city—Dearborn's Southend—through a bold and long-term project we call the Dearborn Industrial Greenbelt.

This initiative has been years in the making. You don't cut a ribbon once and call it done. It's the kind of work that builds year after year, piece by piece, department by department.

The goal? To create a green, living buffer along Industrial Street that slows down traffic, reduces air pollution, and absorbs floodwaters while making space for nature in one of the city's most industrialized areas.

We've already acquired key properties and over 200,000 square feet of land to begin building out this vision and have worked with some of the nation's top thinkers, architects, and urban planners at the University of Michigan to make it happen.

Because in Dearborn, we know that environmental justice isn't just a slogan; it's something we have to design for, zone for, and push for.

The way we see it, everything in Dearborn has a tie back to public health. And nowhere is that felt more strongly than in the south end of our community.

You've heard me talk about it before: Dearborn is the epicenter for childhood asthma.

To improve air quality in the Southend, we raised the standard for good corporate citizenship in the city of Dearborn.

To date, we've secured up to \$4 million in legal settlements requiring corporations to mitigate air pollution from their operations by June 30 of this year.

This includes planting new trees, paving off hazardous waste areas, and replacing sections of the stormwater management system.

As a result, we saw a domino effect happen and other businesses are following suit to avoid the legal process.

But that still isn't enough. Despite the progress we've seen, we knew it was beyond time for Dearborn to crack down on industrial storage.

Storing hazardous materials, especially in industrial sites, releases harmful air particles known as fugitive dust. Simply put, these stored materials don't just sit—they become

part of the air we breathe. And the more they're moved and the taller the piles, the worse the problem gets.

Last summer, we worked with members of our council to propose the strictest bulk storage requirements in the state of Michigan, with support from residents, neighborhood associations, community partners, and public health advocates who have fought for better health standards for decades.

The ordinance will now require companies to maintain piles under 25 feet - as supported by the science - to drastically reduce the risk of fugitive dust. I'm happy to share that many companies are already submitting plans to comply with this new ordinance.

And other cities are already reaching out to ask us for our playbook.

Becoming a destination city isn't just about new buildings or business growth—it's about creating real opportunities for everyone to lead healthy, dignified lives.

It means looking out for our families when others won't. It means filling the gaps and stepping up where it matters most. That's what we do every day—scanning the globe for bold, evidence-based programs we can bring home to Dearborn.

And we are doing that again.

When most people think of Dearborn, they think of the Rouge Factory and auto production. But do you know what else Dearborn is really good at producing? Babies.

That's right: Dearborn produces over 1,700 babies a year. Our birth rate is consistently 60% higher than the state average.

Dearborn has more babies per capita than Michigan as a whole. A striking trend with real implications for schools, services, and public health.

The first year of life is most crucial for a child's development and long-term health. Research has shown that the arrival of a newborn often triggers a sudden financial strain for families, regardless of their income level.

With all these factors considered, my administration is proud to announce that Rx Kids is coming to Dearborn.

Rx Kids is a life-changing program that provides direct financial support to new and expecting mothers.

Through the program, every single Dearborn mother welcoming a baby will receive \$4,500 over six months.

This program would not have been possible without Dr. Mona Hanna, whose visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to child health made Rx Kids a reality—her groundbreaking idea to provide direct financial support to every newborn and their family began in Flint and is now going to transform lives right here in Dearborn.

We are also so grateful for the partnership of County Executive Warren Evans and Deputy County Executive Assad Turfe, who recognized the transformative potential of Rx Kids and stepped up with critical funding to help bring this program to cities across Southeast Michigan.

A special thank you to our Public Health Department, who worked tirelessly to bring Rx Kids home, and to our state senator Sylvia Santana and state representative Alabas Farhat, who worked to secure state funding to make this a reality.

Your collective leadership is saving lives.

This is exactly the kind of upstream, transformative public health solution that defines the future we're building here.

And we are \$1 million dollars away from securing this program for at least 2 years in Dearborn. If anyone in this audience today or watching at home knows someone willing to help us bridge this gap, we are ready to partner with you.

We also recognize that if we want Dearborn to be the ideal destination for visitors and residents alike, we must ensure that we deliver modern services to give our residents a leg up.

Since coming into office, we've launched a brand new website: Dearborn.gov, a modern, user-experience-based multilingual website intuitively designed to make it easier for you to quickly get to the services and information that you need.

Later this year, we will be rolling out our online permitting system which will ensure that our permit desk never closes.

We are also improving how residents can reach the City when they need us.

Now, in non-emergency situations, you can call 311 and be connected with an agent to answer your questions or be routed to the appropriate city staff for quicker 1-on-1 service.

311 is live right now.

Since the introduction of 311, about 1 out of every 3 calls we receive are handled by a virtual agent powered by AI, which in turn, has given our City staff greater capacity to address more complex issues one-on-one with residents.

We've worked to eliminate language barriers by offering translation services in Arabic, Spanish, and English online.

Dearborn has been the premier destination for economic opportunity for as long as Ford engines have been running. We've been a beacon for economic mobility for families, a steady ground to open and operate a small business, and the beating heart of Michigan's entrepreneurial industry.

For as long as I can remember, Warren Avenue has been the lifeblood and beating heart of our city.

It is wholly unique to Dearborn - a corridor where signs greet you in English and Arabic, where dreams of owning a business come to life, and where families create lifelong traditions - from my favorite shawarma at Tuhamas to the one-stop-shop Nice Price to the home of the nation's best honey at Asal Bee.

That might explain Dearborn's high fertility rate.

But for too long, Warren Avenue business owners have watched the City pass by their district despite its rich culture and strong community.

Since we came into office, we have sought to reinvest in Warren Ave just as these businesses have invested in us.

This past winter, we launched the Warren Avenue Facade Improvement Program to help businesses upgrade their exteriors along Warren Ave.

Shops along the corridor from Greenfield to Lonyo are eligible to apply for up to 200 thousand dollars in support from the City to redesign their building facades, making the area a brighter, more modern representation of this historic business destination.

Small businesses that have served as pillars of our community for years, like Nadia's Pharmacy, Cedarland Bakery, and Al Ameer, are some of the businesses to directly benefit from this program.

And our efforts are inspiring local corporations to make similar investments. We are especially proud to work with Hollingsworth, a global supply chain and logistics corporation headquartered on Warren Avenue, who have committed to injecting \$30 million into their historic offices located along the corridor.

Furthermore, with the aid of Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, Dearborn was selected as a grant award winner under the U.S. Department of Transportation's Safe Streets for All grant program in 2023.

The City secured nearly \$25 million to redesign and rebuild Warren Avenue to make the area safer and easier for customers to get to.

We're so excited for what the future holds for Warren Avenue.

We can't leave this evening without talking about blight. For too long, abandoned and deteriorating properties have held our neighborhoods back. But we are making real progress.

On Oakman Boulevard, we delivered on our promise—the long-vacant apartments have been demolished, clearing the way for new opportunities in the community along our downtown East Michigan Avenue corridor.

At Village Plaza, we took the necessary steps to ensure good stewardship, and now, property owners are abating asbestos to provide for a safe demolition scheduled this summer. This eyesore will soon be a thing of the past, making way for new possibilities.

And as for The Hyatt, we finally have a strong partner at the table. Talks are underway to transform this once-neglected space into a vibrant mixed-use residential development, bringing life back to a key part of our city.

This is what progress looks like. We are tearing down what's broken, laying the foundation for growth, and ensuring that our city moves forward—stronger, cleaner, and full of promise.

Dearborn has been the destination for generations because we have something others don't: a community that lifts each other up, where neighbors look out for one another, where families grow together, and where a deep sense of belonging connects us all.

While cities across Michigan have seen their populations plummet, Dearborn remains the fastest-growing city in Michigan—and that is no accident.

Growth is not just happening—we are making it happen.

New generations are choosing Dearborn as their destination because of the investments we've made to create safe neighborhoods, vibrant downtowns, and family-friendly programming.

And we must continue to build on this momentum to ensure it is sustainable and long-lasting for generations to come.

Dearborn is not just keeping the pace—we are setting it.

We are ready for the challenge of change.

We are the example of what a thriving, welcoming, and forward-thinking city looks like.

The state of our City is strong.

Whether you're a growing family, looking to plant roots in a community, or a business hoping to thrive, Dearborn is, and always will be, *the* destination.

Thank you.