



2026 State of the City
North Tonawanda

Mayor Austin J. Tylec

February 3, 2026

To the Residents, Elected Officials, City Employees, and Businesses here tonight; it is both an honor and privilege to stand before you as Mayor of our City to present the 2026 State of The City Address. I'd also like to thank the Historic Riviera Theatre and their staff for hosting us again this year, and a big thank you to Just Say Cheesecake for providing the refreshments.

Tonight is about where North Tonawanda stands today, and the direction we are heading.

Over the past few years, this city has continued to move forward with focus and intention. We have made difficult decisions, addressed long-standing challenges, and strengthened the foundation that supports everything from public services to economic growth.

That progress is the result of clear priorities and disciplined leadership. From the work happening inside City Hall to the record level of development and investment across our community, our approach has remained consistent: confront problems honestly, invest strategically, and plan for the long term.

When this administration took office, we committed to restoring fiscal discipline, rebuilding trust, and creating a sustainable framework for growth. Tonight, I am proud to report that we are delivering on that commitment.

Financial Position

North Tonawanda enters 2026 in a position of financial strength that reflects years of disciplined planning and careful decision making. This stability is not the result of one time actions, but of structured budgets, sustainable revenue growth, and a consistent commitment to responsible fiscal management. At the same time, we remain mindful of the broader financial pressures facing municipalities across New York State.

The City's 2026 General Fund budget of approximately \$48.3 million dollars reflects that balance. It supports essential services, continued investment, and long-term stability while accounting for rising costs beyond our control.

On the revenue side, our local economy continues to perform well. Sales tax revenue is projected at approximately \$11.4 million, nearly \$500,000 more than projected just one year ago, reflecting

steady business activity throughout our commercial districts and neighborhoods. This growth is complemented by additional revenues, including new development activity, cannabis sales tax, increased performance at the Deerwood Golf Course, in-rem foreclosure recoveries, the identification of uncollected water and sewer charges, and new investment opportunities.

Together, these revenue sources strengthen the City's financial position without shifting additional burden onto local taxpayers, allowing us to maintain services, invest responsibly, and continue rebuilding reserves.

Just as important as revenue growth is, so is how we manage it. In 2025, the City continued to diversify and strengthen its revenue base while improving internal accountability. Improved billing practices and system modernization have allowed us to recover previously uncollected revenues and establish more consistent cash flow going forward. Strategic cash management has also played an important role. Over the past year, short-term investments in money market accounts generated more than \$850,000 dollars combined for the General and Capital Funds, strengthening our financial position while keeping city funds secure and readily accessible.

These efforts have allowed us to steadily rebuild our reserves, which now exceed \$3 million dollars. For the fourth year in a row, this administration has balanced the City's budget without touching reserve funds, and under the 2026 budget, we will continue this responsible approach while strengthening the City's fund balance rather than historically drawing it down. This kind of fiscal discipline has been recognized externally, and in 2025, Moody's Investors Service upgraded North Tonawanda's credit rating to A2, the City's first credit upgrade in many years. This reflects confidence in our financial management and will reduce interest costs while strengthening our long term bonding capacity.

At the same time, fiscal responsibility requires honesty about the challenges ahead. As we move into 2026, the City faces more than \$3 million dollars in increased expenses driven largely by factors outside of our control. These include contractual wage obligations, rising retirement system contributions, higher debt service payments, medical insurance costs, and basic operational expenses.

Through continued revenue growth and cost controls, we were able to offset the majority of these increases. However, to maintain services and continue rebuilding reserves, the approved 2026 budget included a modest tax rate adjustment. For the average homeowner, this equates to less than fifty dollars for the year. No one welcomes a tax increase, but this adjustment allows us to protect essential services, avoid the use of reserves, and maintain long-term stability.

When asked about the City's outstanding debt, which currently stands at approximately \$25 million, it's important to understand what that number represents. Roughly \$17 million dollars of that total is directly tied to major capital projects that are supported by state and federal grants. These are reimbursable investments that allow the City to move critical projects forward now, rather than waiting years or missing funding opportunities. As many of these projects are completed this year, those grant funds are returned to the City, significantly offsetting the associated short-term debt.

This is what responsible progress looks like. It means managing multiple priorities at once. It means investing in infrastructure, public facilities, and long-term improvements while maintaining fiscal discipline. And it means recognizing that cities do not succeed by addressing one issue at a time. They succeed by planning carefully and delivering across many fronts simultaneously.

Our responsibility is not to avoid action. It is to manage it wisely. As we move through 2026, our focus remains clear: continue strengthening our financial foundation, deliver the projects our residents expect, and ensure that North Tonawanda remains on a stable and sustainable path forward.

Department of Public Works

One of the most visible measures of responsible leadership is how a city operates day to day. From streets and sidewalks to sanitation and traffic systems, these are the core services that affect daily life.

Under the leadership of Superintendent John Urban, the Department of Public Works handled more than 15,000 resident calls in 2025 while continuing to proactively move the city forward.

Crews paved nearly 19 miles of roadway, completed more than 1,200 sidewalk replacements, addressed hundreds of trip hazards, and carried out daily street, pothole, plowing, and salting operations across the city.

Our DPW also managed extensive sanitation, recycling, and sewer operations. Crews collected nearly 15,000 tons of garbage and bulk debris, emptied more than half-a-million recycling carts, repurposed organic debris into topsoil to reduce landfill costs, and proactively maintained sewer infrastructure throughout the city.

Operational improvements continued as well. New fleet management technology was implemented to extend vehicle life and reduce repair costs, and the department invested in new equipment that improves efficiency and lowers long-term maintenance expenses.

Traffic safety remained a priority. In 2025, the DPW upgraded traffic signals with modern detection technology, installed new lighting and signage, enhanced school zone safety, and completed electrical maintenance across city facilities. The department will also continue utilizing a \$1.6m dollar federal grant to modernize nineteen traffic signals and intersections along Oliver Street and Payne Avenue, significantly improving safety, congestion, and system reliability.

Finally, I am excited to announce a new pilot program launching this spring to directly support residents. The City will set aside \$30,000 dollars in sidewalk funds to assist homeowners with sidewalk replacement costs. Through this sidewalk replacement program, eligible residents will be reimbursed for up to 50% of the cost on a first come, first served basis, allowing us to stretch public dollars further while improving neighborhood safety and appearance.

Thank you to Superintendent John Urban and the entire Department of Public Works team for the work they do every day to keep North Tonawanda running safely, efficiently, and responsibly.

Police Department

North Tonawanda continues to benefit from a strong commitment to public safety, supported by the professionalism and dedication of the North Tonawanda Police Department. Throughout 2025, the department focused on crime prevention, officer training, modernized equipment, and meaningful community engagement.

According to data from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, North Tonawanda has experienced a steady downward trend in crime since 2021, even as the department continues to respond to more than 50,000 calls for service each year. This reflects proactive policing strategies, effective investigations, and strong collaboration between officers and the community.

A major focus in 2025 was investing in officer safety and readiness. With grant assistance secured through Assemblyman Conrad's office, the Police Department completed a \$137,000 full renovation of its firearms training range. The facility was fully rebuilt for the first time since the 1980s and is now among the most modern law enforcement training ranges in the region. This investment strengthens annual state-mandated training and supports the safety and proficiency of our officers.

Public safety technology continued to advance as well. New camera systems were acquired to replace outdated equipment in high-demand areas, including the downtown Webster Street district and portions of Oliver Street. These systems will significantly improve coverage, reliability, and provide detectives with critical tools to investigate and solve crimes. Installation is scheduled for completion by fall 2026.

Community engagement remained a core part of the department's work. Officers participated in youth and family events throughout the year, including child safety seat checks, Trunk-or-Treat events, the North Tonawanda Senior Class Picnic, and a youth basketball tournament. During the holiday season, the department partnered with Lumber City Church to support 166 families through the Boxes of Hope program and delivered gifts to more than 400 children through Shop with a Cop.

School Resource Officers continue to play a critical role in student safety and well-being. Over the past year, SROs expanded their efforts to address chronic absenteeism through coordinated home visits with school administrators. In several cases, these efforts uncovered serious safety concerns that required further intervention. For 2026, the City, School District leadership, and Police Department will work together to develop a more comprehensive strategy to address truancy and its underlying causes.

The Department also deployed advanced skimming-detection technology to proactively combat credit card fraud and protect both residents and local businesses. These scanners enable officers to quickly detect hidden skimming devices in ATMs, gas pumps, and retail card readers, helping prevent financial losses before they occur.

The equipment was acquired at no cost to taxpayers, funded entirely through asset forfeiture resources legally restricted for law enforcement use. By incorporating this technology into routine patrols, the department is strengthening partnerships with local businesses, reducing fraud-related investigations, and staying ahead of increasingly sophisticated technology based crimes.

Through continued investment, professional training, modern technology, and strong community partnerships, the North Tonawanda Police Department remains focused on protecting residents and maintaining the quality of life our community expects.

My sincere appreciation goes to Chief Keith Glass and the entire Police Department for their steadfast dedication to public safety. Your hard work and innovative efforts help ensure North Tonawanda remains one of the safest cities in New York State.

Fire Department

The North Tonawanda Fire Department continues to see record levels of demand, responding to nearly 4,000 calls for service last year, a five percent increase over the year before. Those responses included more than 3,200 medical emergencies, 362 fire alarms, 146 motor vehicle accidents, and 225 other calls for assistance. Even with this high activity level, fire losses declined by 15 percent, with total damage estimated at \$612,000, a reflection of the department's fast, effective response and strong prevention efforts.

Training remains a top priority. This year, the Training Division completed 3,800 hours of instruction, reinforcing our commitment to professional development and operational readiness. The department also invested in upgraded training center technology and modern training aids to ensure our firefighters continue to train to the highest standards. Four members completed the New York State Paramedic Program, expanding our advanced life support capabilities. In

addition, four firefighters completed advanced Fire Officer courses, three became certified Fire Instructors, and one newly promoted Captain completed the First Line Supervisor Training Program during a 30-day residency at the FDNY Training Academy.

The department also made significant progress in securing outside funding to strengthen operations while easing the burden on taxpayers. In 2025, we received \$125,000 through Assemblyman Conrad to repair the floor at Engine 4, \$80,000 for new battery-powered extrication tools, and \$8,000 from the East Hill Foundation for upgraded ventilation equipment. Looking ahead to 2026, the department will pursue additional grants to help fund a new ladder truck, updated cardiac monitors and defibrillators, and a fire prevention trailer. We also added the F-500 firefighting agent to our capabilities this year, improving our effectiveness against a wider range of fires, including lithium-ion battery incidents, while reducing extinguishment time and water usage.

Through financial planning and strategic use of grants, the department continues to enhance public safety while preparing for future demands. At the same time, we are responsibly addressing long-term capital needs, including repairs to our aging ladder truck as we plan for its eventual replacement, and over \$1 million in projected structural repairs to Fire Headquarters.

Looking ahead, the Fire Chief is piloting new operational changes within the Fire Department. This year, we will be testing a new response model designed to improve both safety and efficiency. This initiative will place more firefighters on the scene in the early stages of an emergency through strategic staffing adjustments, ensuring stronger staffing on our first-due apparatus.

Thank you to Fire Chief Doug Orłowski and the members of the North Tonawanda Fire Department for their continued service and dedication to our community.

Department of Parks and Recreation

In 2025, the Parks and Recreation Department, under the leadership of Director Alex Domaradzki, continued to see strong growth across programs, facilities, and community events.

Our parks and public spaces once again served as vibrant gathering places. Throughout the year, the City hosted a wide range of events including concert series, the Thunder on the Niagara boat races, Fourth of July celebrations, the New Year's Eve Ball Drop, and the American Kite Flyers Association National Convention. Gateway Harbor alone welcomed more than 1,700 boats, many from outside the region, reinforcing North Tonawanda's identity as a premier waterfront destination. This year will also mark America's 250th birthday and we can look forward to themed events commemorating this historic celebration.

The City also made significant investments in park infrastructure and accessibility. Pinewoods Park received new playground amenities, repaved access paths, and a new parking area to meet growing demand. At Colonel Payne Park, the playground was fully replaced, with final site improvements scheduled for completion this spring. Mayor's Park welcomed a new fishing pier and kayak launch, expanding public access to the waterfront, and at Wurlitzer Park, newly paved tennis courts will soon be converted into five pickleball courts as we continue to modernize our park system citywide.

Programming remains a cornerstone of the department's success. Youth programs served more than 2,000 participants through camps, sports, educational activities, and special events. Adult recreation saw strong engagement as well, with more than 1,500 residents participating in leagues and fitness programs including volleyball, softball, kickball, pickleball, and exercise classes. Senior programming continued to grow, with over 1,000 participants attending activities such as bingo, cards, dinner dances, health programs, and shopping services.

Deerwood Golf Course delivered another record setting year, with more than 73,000 rounds played and over \$1.7 million in gross revenue, further solidifying its status as a premier public golf facility. Planned improvements including drainage enhancements, pond upgrades, and tee box renovations will continue to strengthen this important asset. This year also marks Deerwood's 50th anniversary, which will be celebrated with limited edition memorabilia, a commemorative logo, and a community event. I want to recognize Course Superintendent Matt Borowiec and Operations Supervisor Edgy Skovenski for their leadership, and thank Mr. Skovenski for his many years of dedicated service as he enters retirement.

Looking ahead, the City is planning for Deerwood's long-term success. The course currently includes approximately 18,000 feet of cart paths; however, the lack of full connectivity limits play during wet conditions and can result in lost revenue of up to \$6,000 per day. In 2026, the City will work with an engineering team to design an additional 16,000 feet of cart paths to complete a fully connected system. With a plan in place, construction could begin in the spring of 2027, improving golfer accessibility, reducing weather-related closures, and ensuring more consistent revenue for this important municipal asset.

Plans for the new aquatic center at Payne Park are also moving forward. With some initial demolition work started, construction is expected to begin in the coming months. This \$8.4 million, grant-funded project will include an accessible shallow water play area with a slide, a lap pool with diving boards, new locker rooms, and a concession stand to deliver a long-awaited amenity for families and residents.

To support these programs long term, the City continues to advance plans for a new community center. While we were recently unsuccessful in securing funding through the NY BRICKS program, this project remains a priority. City officials and department heads will be meeting this month to determine a clear path forward for funding opportunities. The proposed center would repurpose the Norman Keller Building into a centralized facility for Recreation Department offices, youth programming, our development agency, and the senior center. An investment that is essential to serving residents of all ages.

Finally, I want to recognize our community partners who help make this work possible. Organizations such as CHANT, the North Tonawanda Botanical Gardens Organization, Project Pride, and The Gateway Harbor Committee play a vital role in beautifying our city, expanding recreational and educational opportunities, and hosting events that draw residents and visitors alike.

Thank you to Alex Domaradzki and the entire Parks and Recreation team for their dedication and hard work in making 2025 a truly successful year for our community.

City Market

Under the direction of Chris DelPrince, the North Tonawanda City Market has continued to earn its distinction as the #1 Market in the Nation, with even more growth ahead.

Vendor participation and sales continue to rise year after year, and the market has become a true one stop destination for residents and visitors. Operating year round, attendance regularly reaches 5,000 to 10,000 people on Saturdays, reinforcing its role as a consistent community and economic anchor.

Accessibility also remains a core focus. SNAP benefit usage at the market has grown to over \$200,000, up from just \$10,000 four years ago. In addition, the City distributed approximately \$120,000 these past few months in New York State food relief coupons, helping families access fresh food while putting money directly into vendors' pockets.

Although we did not get awarded a \$750,000 grant through New York State Agriculture and Markets to create an indoor market space, we did secure funding through the same program to support key improvements, including enhanced lighting, new signage, updated restrooms, and expanded marketing efforts. In addition, the City paved the market site this past year, creating a safer, more accessible, and more welcoming experience for both vendors and patrons.

The diversity of vendors continues to be one of the market's greatest strengths, driving increased sales across the board. Over the past four years, the City Market has seen more investment and growth than ever before, solidifying North Tonawanda's position as home to the premier market in the region.

Thank you to Market Manager Chris DelPrince, Chris Boryszewski, and our vendors for their dedication and hard work in making the North Tonawanda City Market a model for communities across the region.

Clerk-Treasurer's Office

The Clerk-Treasurer's Office serves as the operational center of City Hall, supporting nearly every facet of municipal operations and ensuring the City's work moves forward each day. The office manages agendas for the Common Council, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board, coordinates

bid openings and public hearings, and works closely with departments to keep City business running smoothly.

At the same time, staff provide direct service to residents by handling parking tickets, permits, and vital records, including birth certificates, marriage licenses, and death certificates. The office also oversees the collection of county, city, and school taxes, processes water bill payments, and manages City Market payments and application paperwork.

In 2025, the office worked with the City Attorney's Office to conduct the City's first in-rem property auction since COVID, generating more than \$700,000 in revenue. The team is already preparing for another auction in 2026, which is projected to generate approximately \$1.5 million.

The staff have also taken on the transition to new software associated with the water meter replacement project, working across departments to implement the updated water billing system. Alongside the Accounting Department, they continue upgrading internal software to improve communication and reporting, while technology improvements in the Council Chambers are underway to enhance sound quality and meeting logistics.

Thank you to our Clerk-Treasurer, Donna Braun, and her team for the essential behind-the-scenes work that keeps City Hall operating efficiently every day.

Assessor and Building Departments

One of the City's strongest economic drivers continues to be growth in real estate and development activity. This includes steady home sales, new business investment, property improvements, and large-scale construction coordinated through the Building Department and Assessor's Office. Over the past 12 months, the Assessor's Office recorded more than 800 home sales, while the Building Department oversaw approximately \$32 million dollars in construction for 2025 and more than \$400,000 in revenue from permits and licenses.

This level of activity is helping stabilize North Tonawanda's population after years of decline. Through projects already completed, approved, or under development, the City is positioned to add more than 300 new residential units, supporting renewed population growth and a stronger tax base.

Several major projects highlight this momentum, including the Bush Meadow development, where Phase 1 delivered 30 new homes and Phase 2 will add an additional 35 homes, both expected to be completed later this year. Adjacent to this area, additional site work is underway to support 64 new residential units across 16 buildings, along with a 6,000-square-foot expansion at Walmart to enhance grocery pickup services.

As growth continues, so does the need for strong oversight. North Tonawanda has more than 12,000 properties citywide, including approximately 1,500 rental properties that account for nearly 4,500 rental units. Under the leadership of Building Inspector Rob DePaolo, the Building Department has strengthened oversight of this housing stock through the implementation of a Rental Registration and Compliance Program, which has already registered more than 65 percent of rental properties. This program improves accountability, enhances coordination between City departments, and helps ensure safe, well-maintained housing, particularly when properties are owned by absentee landlords.

Fees generated through the program are being reinvested to modernize operations through a new online platform that will allow residents to submit code complaints, permits, contractor licenses, and rental registrations digitally, with future expansion planned for zoning and planning applications.

At the same time, we continue to confront some of the City's most complex redevelopment challenges. One of the most significant is the former Lowry Middle School site. Over the years, the City has worked to hold the private owner accountable, pushing for the property to be properly secured and boarded while viable redevelopment options are pursued. Numerous developers have explored redevelopment of this approximately \$40 million dollar project, but feasibility challenges have limited progress, even with the City's assistance in securing a \$1.5 million dollar Restore NY grant.

In recent months, however, a more promising path forward has begun to take shape. The City is actively working with the current owner, the County Land Bank, state agencies, and two interested development partners to evaluate redevelopment options that include senior housing and market-rate residential units. While the scale and cost of this site remain challenging, we

remain committed to doing everything within our authority to return this property to productive use and restore it as a positive asset for the surrounding neighborhood.

I want to thank Building Inspector Rob DePaolo, Assessor Barbara Klenke, and their teams for their professionalism and dedication to moving North Tonawanda forward.

Engineering Department

Under the leadership of City Engineer Chelsea Spahr and Assistant City Engineer Travis Sikora, the Engineering Department delivered another strong year, advancing projects that improve safety, mobility, and quality of life throughout North Tonawanda.

In 2025, the department managed millions of dollars in public projects, including roadway and parking lot resurfacing at Gratwick Park, Klimek Veterans Park, and Pinewoods Park, while overseeing major infrastructure investments across the city.

This spring, residents will see the completion of the \$2.3 million dollar Sweeney Street Bike Path extension, connecting Mayor's Park to the Botanical Gardens and expanding safe, accessible recreation. This work will be paired with the full repaving of Sweeney Street following completion of underground infrastructure improvements.

Later this year, the City anticipates advancing the realignment of 19th Street and Meadow Drive, a project designed to improve safety, enhance traffic flow, and replace an outdated signal system.

Significant pedestrian and streetscape investments are also moving forward. Through a combined \$4.25 million dollars in grant funding, the Smart Growth 2.0 and Oliver Street Walkability projects are transforming the downtown area. Construction at Fleishman Park began in 2025 and will be completed this spring, featuring enhanced walkability, public space improvements, and a signature clock tower. On Oliver Street, one of the largest streetscape investments in the city's history, supported by a \$3.25 million dollar grant, will deliver new sidewalks, seating, green space, green infrastructure upgrades, and modern lighting, with construction anticipated this spring.

The department is also working closely with the North Tonawanda City School District on a Safe Routes to School Transportation Alternatives Program grant, aimed at repairing and adding sidewalks around school areas to improve safety and connectivity for students and families.

In addition, the City is nearing completion of a \$625,000 NYSDOT Twin City Memorial Highway study, which reimagines this corridor to improve connectivity and traffic flow while laying the groundwork for a potential \$30 million federal grant to support future reconstruction and revitalization.

Thanks to the dedication and expertise of Chelsea, Travis, and the Engineering team, these projects are strengthening our infrastructure, improving everyday experiences for residents, and positioning North Tonawanda for continued progress and long-term success.

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

Over the past year, the City made significant progress across both our water and wastewater treatment systems, strengthening reliability, efficiency, and long-term infrastructure planning.

Water Distribution and Treatment

In 2025, the Water Distribution Department continued providing safe and reliable service citywide. Crews repaired approximately 60 water main breaks, replaced multiple fire hydrants, and completed routine flushing and valve maintenance to maintain proper chlorine residuals and protect water quality.

A major milestone was the launch of the residential water meter replacement program. Beginning this past April, the City partnered with Professional Meters Inc. to install modern, remote-read meters. This long overdue upgrade improves billing accuracy, supports compliance with federal Lead and Copper Service Line Inventory requirements, reduces unbilled water loss, and strengthens leak detection for more proactive system maintenance.

To date, more than 10,500 meters have been installed, representing over 93 percent of residential meters. Improved accuracy and recovery of unpaid usage also contributed to a \$1.37 million increase in water & sewer billing revenue from 2024 to 2025. This year, the City will complete the remaining residential installations, expand the program to replace all one-inch

meters, and begin requiring replacement of large commercial meters. The success of the new meter program has confirmed what we suspected: that significant usage was previously going unreported. By uncovering this lost revenue, we were able to lower user's sewer rate from \$6 to \$5 per 1,000 gallons for 2026.

Water Department

The Water Department remained fully operational throughout 2025 with no Department of Health violations, while advancing several major infrastructure upgrades. A \$1.3 million Critical Needs Project is rehabilitating low and high service pumps, replacing motors and variable frequency drives, and upgrading electrical systems, PLCs, and the SCADA system. These improvements will enhance reliability, improve efficiency, and position the City for National Grid energy rebates, with completion expected in this year.

The City also advanced Phase Two of the Water Plant Generator Project, which is scheduled to begin construction in 2026. Funded through a WIIA grant, this phase will integrate the plant's primary power supply with generator and electrical upgrades completed in late 2024, allowing uninterrupted service during extended power outages to ensure our city always has water access.

In addition, the Erie Water Tower was drained, inspected, and repaired this past Fall. New seals were installed to correct a critical leak, and this work helped secure a \$1.4 million WIIA grant to support future water tower and distribution system improvements. Design work for those upgrades will begin in 2026.

Wastewater Treatment

In 2025, the Wastewater Department continued balancing daily operations with long-term infrastructure investments. Design was completed for a \$14 million sludge handling and digester rehabilitation project, which includes a new digester roof, upgraded heating and mixing systems, and improved safety features. This project is supported by \$3.5 million in WIIA funding and a \$2.5 million DEC grant and is expected to go out to bid in spring 2026.

The plant also advanced storm response improvements with the design and procurement of a Variable Frequency Drive for one of the facility's 40-million-gallon storm pumps. Installation is

planned for spring and will reduce peak electrical costs, decrease equipment wear, and improve treatment consistency during storm events.

In spring 2025, the City opened bids for the Carbon Building Piping Project. While \$5 million in DEC grant funding was secured, bid prices exceeded \$9 million even after multiple redesigns. Rather than take on additional debt, the project was strategically restructured into targeted, high-priority repairs. Staff were trained in new internal pipe repair techniques that can now be used throughout the facility, allowing critical needs to be addressed while redirecting funding toward the digester project and other priority improvements.

Across both systems, the Water and Wastewater teams continue to operate efficiently and cost effectively. Expanded preventative maintenance and increased in house work have reduced expenses while still delivering major repairs and upgrades, including rehabilitation of an eight million gallon sewage pump and VFD, repairs to the main inlet sample pump, and exterior building improvements at the wastewater plant.

Over the past four years, the City has secured approximately \$12 million in grant funding for water and wastewater infrastructure. That funding represents more than half of the roughly \$20 million in total project costs, allowing us to make long-overdue investments while significantly limiting the burden on taxpayers. In addition, this past year the City completed a water and sewer income survey through the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation, which qualified North Tonawanda for zero-interest financing on future capital projects and strengthened our eligibility for additional state funding and grant opportunities.

These efforts reflect a continued commitment to protecting essential infrastructure through smart planning, disciplined operations, and strategic use of outside funding. Thanks to the leadership of Superintendent Jason Koepsell and his dedicated team, North Tonawanda residents can rely on safe, dependable water and wastewater service today, while the City continues planning responsibly and sustainably for the future.

Community Development and Public–Private Investment

Community development in North Tonawanda is about aligning public investment, private development, and long-term planning to strengthen neighborhoods, expand housing options, and support business growth in a way that is intentional and sustainable.

In 2025, that coordination produced real momentum. Several long planned projects moved from concept to action, while citywide planning efforts ensured that growth is guided by a clear and responsible vision for the future.

On Tonawanda Island, the \$30 million-plus mixed-use development at 78 Bridge Street is set to break ground this year. This project will deliver the first new housing development on the island, including market-rate apartments and hotel-style short-term rental suites, along with commercial space and public amenities.

Coupled with this, is a \$2.5 million dollar state infrastructure grant secured by the City, which will support a \$5.6 million dollar project for critical infrastructure upgrades, all of which will be fully financed by the project's private developer, Visone Co., with no cost or long-term debt to the City. These improvements will expand sanitary systems, drainage, sidewalks, and streetscape elements, while increasing capacity and positioning more than 30 acres of underutilized waterfront property for future development.

Along the riverfront, redevelopment is also moving forward at 235 River Road, the former Metzger's Removal site. This property is being transformed into a major mixed-use residential development delivering approximately 90 market-rate apartments, new commercial space, and on-site amenities through two four-story buildings. With key approvals secured, brownfield remediation underway, and public support through \$1 million in Restore NY funding, the site is now fully positioned for construction.

Another important redevelopment is taking shape at DeGraff Memorial Hospital, where plans by People Incorporated are advancing to convert the tower portion of the facility into affordable senior housing. This project responds to a documented need for senior housing in our community and includes space for offices and supportive programming, reflecting a strong partnership between the City and nonprofit organizations.

Our commitment to strengthening North Tonawanda extends beyond large scale development. Through a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant, low-income homeowners are receiving assistance to rehabilitate aging properties, address code issues, and combat blight in our neighborhoods. This is an effort we intend to expand, ensuring reinvestment reaches residents who need it most.

All of this work is grounded in thoughtful, citywide planning. The Comprehensive Plan has been completed, our Local Waterfront Revitalization Program update is underway, and our Zoning Code update began this year to ensure future development aligns with community goals, protects our neighborhoods, and encourages smart growth.

This momentum is also reflected in our local business community. In 2025, North Tonawanda welcomed new and expanding businesses including She Gathers, Wicked Retro, Legacy Barbershop, LDS Consulting, Cali's Corner, The IronTon, Head2Toe Body Stretch and Massage, Aroma Cannabis, Mystical Emporium, Ascend Physical Therapy Group, and many others, strengthening our commercial districts and local economy.

What ties all of this together is collaboration. This administration has worked deliberately across City departments and in partnership with state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and business owners to pursue coordinated and responsible growth. Over the past few years, that approach has resulted in approximately \$40 million in grant funding, leveraged more than \$150 million in private investment across North Tonawanda, and supported the creation of hundreds of new jobs.

Strengthening our grant strategy has been a key driver of that success. This administration hired a full-service grants, engineering, planning, and architectural firm to expand the City's capacity and competitiveness, alongside the continued work of City staff. Through that partnership alone, North Tonawanda has secured approximately \$11.1 million in grant funding over the past four years at a cost of just over \$65,000, delivering a strong return on investment and allowing critical projects to move forward while minimizing the financial burden on taxpayers.

Through the leadership of Community Development Director Laura Wilson, her team, and the continued work of the Lumber City Development Corporation, North Tonawanda is not just

planning for the future. We are building it. These projects and partnerships reflect a city that is confident in its direction, disciplined in its approach, and committed to creating opportunity for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

Conclusions

North Tonawanda is a city that is moving forward, and it is doing so with intention. The progress we have made is real. It is visible in our neighborhoods, in our infrastructure, in our financial stability, and in the strength of our local economy. Just as important, we have positioned this city to keep moving forward, to take on larger challenges, and to compete at a higher level than we have in many years.

That does not happen by chance. It happens because we plan carefully, make disciplined decisions, and deliver. It happens because our city departments perform at a high standard, because businesses continue to invest here, because our partners at the state and federal level see North Tonawanda as a city that follows through, and because our residents expect and demand progress.

Across Western New York, North Tonawanda is being recognized as a city that gets results. A city that manages its finances responsibly. A city that invests strategically. And a city that is willing to do the hard work required to move forward, not just talk about it.

I am proud of what we have accomplished together. I am committed to continuing this work with focus, urgency, and accountability. And I am excited about what comes next, because the direction we are on positions North Tonawanda for its strongest and most successful years ahead.

Thank you to our elected officials for your commitment to service, thank you to our city employees for your dedication, and thank you to everyone here tonight for your time, your support, and your confidence in the direction of our City.

Austin J. Tylec

Honorable Austin J. Tylec
Mayor, City of North Tonawanda