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Community Focus Key for Mayor

Mayor reflects on mid-term progress and calls for community involvement.

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JULY 14, 2005 -- Mayor John W. Hickenlooper delivered his mid-term State of the City Address Thursday, during which he outlined his commitment to improve the community by way of increased personnel and technology for public safety, ongoing redevelopment and tourism projects, fiscal responsibility, streamlining city processes, expanding educational opportunities, and promoting volunteerism.

Amid blue skies and a chorus of chirping birds in Civic Center Park, the mayor called upon Denverites to embrace a "front porch" attitude and "converge in public places like this site, places where we can convene to think about our shared fortunes and give shape to our common dreams."

Mayor Hickenlooper noted that it has been two years since an entirely new administration was elected into office, with the exception of three council members.

Calling it the "most diverse administration in Denver's history," he cited local accomplishments such as balanced budgets and personnel changes, a citywide alley-paving project, popular new cultural events, and police reform initiatives.

He also mentioned several regional issues passed by voters over the last two years that will positively impact the city, including two school bond initiatives, SCFD funding, Justice Center funding, and FasTracks.

Hickenlooper then turned to current plans. Stating that, "a city's first obligation has been to protect its citizens from harm and fear," he outlined the status of Denver's Police Department, which is facing staffing shortages as aging officers retire. This year, an eight percent budget increase will enable the department to [hire 169 new officers](#).

He also outlined new technologies that the department will have access to over the next few years to help officers identify crime trends, integrate police and court records, and respond to calls more quickly and efficiently.

Noting that, "a safer city is important because it is the foundation on which we build prosperity," the mayor named several projects that will improve the community and build tourism.

These include the long-awaited redevelopment of Dahlia Square, transit plans for Denver Union Station, expansion of the Colorado Convention Center, construction of the new Hyatt Hotel, additions such as the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, and more.

He also gave his nod to Referendums C and D, targeting the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR) on the November ballot.

"Just as any business must reinvest in order to grow, so too must our city and state reinvest in education and transportation, so that our children and grandchildren can have better jobs and greater opportunity than we have today," Hickenlooper stated.

He then moved to the topic of homelessness, which served as the foundation for a call to faith-based organizations and individual residents to work together to support the city's [plan to end homelessness](#) and invest in the community.

"Together, this community can beat homelessness. Together, we must embrace a city where all families have homes, where everyone has the opportunity to be self-sufficient, where residents and tourists can walk our streets without being panhandled or frightened," the mayor said.

He announced a new partnership between the city, the Mile High United Way, and Metro Volunteers to promote volunteerism. Later this summer, a new Web site will be launched to provide potential volunteers with a searchable database of opportunities and events.

Mayor Hickenlooper also stressed the city's ongoing commitment to improve college access for students in the Denver Public School system.

Launched in March, the CollegeInvest Mile-High [GRADS program](#) provides up to \$1,500 in student loan forgiveness for Denver high school graduates. Hickenlooper announced that the program will receive an additional \$12 million in state funding specifically for need-based scholarships for Denver students.

Finally, the mayor named several successes and ongoing initiatives to streamline city services and improve customer service, including the 3-1-1 call center which is expected to be phased-in next year, electronic filing in the Clerk and Recorder's Office, creation of the [Denver Business Assistance Center](#), and an overhaul of the city's development review and permitting processes.

Mayor Hickenlooper ended his speech on a positive note. He reiterated his hope for a unified and prosperous community, stating, "let us envision Denver as a hub of opportunity: a place renowned for its superior schools, thriving economy, and vast philanthropic commitment."

Written by [Betsy Kimak](#), Internet Site Administrator, Customer Information Services.

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