



**State of the Town Address**  
**Mayor Ronnie Williams**  
**January 17, 2017**

Hello. I'm Mayor Ronnie Williams, and I am honored to present the 2017 State of the Town address. The state of our town is strong. You can see evidence of robust growth all over; you can sense the optimism of our citizens; you can feel how we are moving Garner forward.

In 2016, the Council hired a new town manager who skillfully navigated a smooth leadership transition. The manager, his budget team and Council worked through some significant challenges during the creation and approval of the current fiscal year budget. Council and staff also created a new multiyear strategic plan that provides a clear vision forward.

We made noteworthy progress on our bond program in the past 12 months. We opened the new police station and broke ground on the new Town Hall and Recreation Center. We opened our second dog park and completed a sidewalk project on Benson Road and Main Street.

In 2017, the new Town Hall will open. It will enable our staff to provide even more timely and efficient services to taxpayers. The Recreation Center should be near completion by the end this year. That facility will greatly enhance the quality of life in our town for all of our citizens.

In 2016, the Town Council made the wise decision to purchase the Meadowbrook Country Club property so that we can enhance our parks and recreation amenities in that key growth area. It is all part of our effort to oversee orderly growth in Garner and to provide the parkland and open space that citizens expect.

We are in the midst of updating our Comprehensive Growth and Transportation Plans—and we're doing it with strong citizen engagement. The project, known as Garner Forward, will establish a roadmap for our town's orderly growth in the years ahead. I encourage you to visit [GarnerForward.com](http://GarnerForward.com) to learn more and to find out how you can get involved.

All of this occurs as Garner nears 30,000 in population—with fast future growth to be expected.

In the past year, the Town has seen considerable growth in its industrial, retail and residential sectors. Stock America, a company that produces sterilization systems, moved its corporate headquarters to Greenfield North Business Park, and Improved Nature, which makes meat substitute products, decided to build its manufacturing center in North Garner.

On the retail side, we've seen the opening of several new shops and restaurants in White Oak, while on the residential side, we saw the approval of over 1,900 new residential units.

This past year on the economic development front, we've also seen our two premier industrial sites be designated Fiber Ready by AT&T. And with voters approving a new transit plan, we should eventually see commuter rail service coming to downtown Garner.

All in all, we are very well positioned to grow and prosper in the years ahead.

There were other signs of growth in the past year—such as the recent groundbreaking for the new YMCA facility on Aversboro Road as well as the opening of South Garner High School and the groundbreaking for Bryan Road Elementary.

Citizens can expect superior service delivery even as we grow. You saw an example of that this past year when Garner Fire and Rescue earned higher insurance ratings, which will mean lower insurance premiums for many in our town.

You see that continued commitment to outstanding service delivery and quality of life in other ways, too. In the past year, the Town launched a new and improved website and continued to offer great special events and programming through our nationally accredited Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department.

We've had these successes while continuing to look for ways to better manage taxpayer dollars, whether that's through the Revenue Savings Plan or by looking for ways to be smarter in our investments. As we continue to move Garner forward, we will always maintain our commitment to be fiscally responsible.

We will also continue to engage our citizens in a variety of ways. In 2016, our nationally accredited Police Department was proactive in reaching out to the community, holding several public forums and producing a comprehensive response to the President's 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Task Force on Policing Report. That's another example of citizen engagement that makes our community stronger.

It is an honor to work such dedicated Town Council members—Mayor Pro Tem Behringer and Council Members Johns, Kennedy, Marshburn and Singleton. They have created a roadmap for success and always strive to do whatever is in the best interests of Garner.

I also want to commend our key service partners—Garner Fire and Rescue and the Garner Chamber of Commerce. We are always stronger when we work together.

With wise leadership, strong partnerships and high levels of citizen engagement, I know that we can continue to move Garner forward and maintain the hometown spirit that our town is known for. I am eager to see what the future holds for our All-America City. I encourage you to join us in the journey.

Thank you. God bless you, and may God continue to bless Garner.

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