

***Mayor Marc C. Laredo
Inaugural Address
January 1, 2026***

Happy New Year and welcome to City Hall!

A special thank you to Gov. Healey and all the elected officials here today. Gov. Healey we are grateful for your leadership of our Commonwealth and I especially appreciate your meaningful words today.

This has been an incredible journey, and I will start by taking a moment for some words of gratitude.

Thank you

First, my family. In our small, rather noisy house on Bellevue Street, my Jewish immigrant parents, one having left Nazi Germany as a teenager and the other a concentration camp survivor from Czechoslovakia, raised me, my brother Dan, and my sister Debbie. Despite financial and health challenges, they instilled in us the values of hard work, education, and a profound respect for democratic values and service to our community. I like to think that they are looking down today on the three of us, our spouses, our children and their spouses, and their new great-granddaughter with pride and joy.

I have been married to Roberta for over 41 years, and I am incredibly grateful for her love and support. Together, we have built a loving home with three healthy, happy children – Josh, Matt, and Emma, our daughter-in-law Joanna Yelen, our soon to be daughter-in-law Sarah Schwartz, and our beautiful granddaughter Dahlia. Our family extends to my brother and sister-in-law, Stuart Karon and Jodi Wenger, their three children – Holden, Asa, and Theo, and my mother-in-law Thelma Karon plus Joanna's parents, Charlie Yelen and Barbara Newman.

To our friends, neighbors, Ward School and Temple Emanuel communities, professional colleagues, and the many people who helped me get to this day, I am so grateful for your support.

I want to thank my predecessors in this office, starting with the late Mayors Mann, Concannon, and Warren, who recently was taken from us too soon, and our two former mayors who are still with us, Mayor Cohen and Mayor Fuller. Each of them

brought individual strengths to the office and all worked tirelessly to make Newton a better city. I especially want to thank Mayor Fuller, who cares deeply about the city and leaves a strong legacy. I pledge to work as hard as she did in leading our city forward.

We have many members of the Administration with us today, including most of my Executive team and many department heads, along with other city staff. We have a terrific team of city employees. Thank you for the work that you have done and will continue to do, day in and day out, for the residents of this city!

This day belongs to all three branches of our government. Congratulations to my City Council and School Committee colleagues and especially the many new members of each body. I look forward to working with each one of you to make Newton the best possible place it can be.

Finally, thank you to the residents of this great city who have placed your trust and confidence in me and all your elected officials. You are our employers, and we will always remember that we work for you.

My goals

My Administration will have three overarching goals: provide an excellent education for all our children; deliver outstanding city services; and build community.

First, education. Our responsibility is to prepare our children for success as adults: a mastery of basic and more complex skills; resiliency to face life's challenges; and the ability to be life-long learners. To do that, we must promote academic excellence and challenging coursework; offer outstanding extracurricular activities; and ensure that every child feels welcome, safe, and secure in an inclusive school environment. My Administration will work tirelessly with the City Council, the School Committee, and Superintendent Nolin to support our educators and provide our schools with the financial resources needed to achieve these goals.

Second, outstanding city services. To be effective, local government must first deliver basic services in a dependable and efficient manner: guarantee that our police officers and firefighters, with the support of our dispatchers, will be there in time of need; pave our streets and make our sidewalks safe and clear them after the snow falls; ensure that trash and recycling is picked up on time; promote safe multimodal transportation, while also keeping traffic moving; combat and become

more resilient to the impacts of climate change; and keep our parks, city trees, and athletic fields well maintained. As we said at my law firm, some of our best results are the ones you have never heard of and that is true with basic city services. If we do our jobs well, you may often take success for granted.

But just providing basic services is not enough. We will constantly be finding ways to do even better. It means listening to and working with existing and new businesses to make Newton a welcoming and inviting place. It means using technology to make us more efficient, and data to drive decision-making. It means being transparent with every decision we make and engaging with and listening to our residents before we make decisions. It means prioritizing sustainability and resiliency in everything we do. It means growing our city by responsibly adding new housing while building on what makes Newton such a special place to live. It means breathing even more life into our arts, culture, and community events, including partnering with our non-profits and other community groups, to help bring us all together. And it means maintaining a responsible and sustainable financial strategy for the city so that our residents know that their tax dollars are well spent and we are responsibly planning for Newton's future.

And then there is community. As I knocked on doors throughout the city, it was clear to me that people love living here! And I agree – that is why Newton has been my home for most of my life. At a time of great turmoil in other parts of our country, with loud, angry voices and a fundamental lack of respect for the rule of law, disregard for democratic values, and intolerance of others, Newton must be different. Together, we will ensure that regardless of your race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, socio-economic status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, or whom you love, you will feel safe, supported, and welcome here in Newton. Together, we will support an inclusive community where every resident—no matter who they are, where they come from, or how long they have lived here—has a real voice in our city and a real stake in its future. Together, we will build on our shared values and promote community throughout each of our thirteen villages.

How are we going to get this work done

So how are we going to get this work done? Here are three guiding principles: a team approach; excellent customer service; and a dedication to listening, trying new and creative approaches to governance, and to owning and learning from our mistakes.

First, leading this city is a team effort, and we have assembled a talented team: Chief Operating Officer Josh Morse; Chief Community Services Officer John Rice; and Chief of Staff Dana Hanson are all new to their roles but veterans of city government. Along with the returning Executive Office staff - Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux; Communications Director Ellen Ishkanian; Director of Community Engagement & Inclusion Hattie Kerwin Derrick; Citizens Assistance Officer Amalia Timbers; and Executive Aide Jaclyn Norton - we will collectively strive to be the most responsive, inclusive, and engaging administration Newton has ever experienced by listening broadly, acting fairly, and serving all.

But let me also be clear. As President Harry Truman bluntly reminded us “The buck stops here.” Our successes will be the result of our collective efforts. Any failures will be with me, and me alone.

Second, we will have a customer service mentality throughout city government, both as we provide outstanding services to our residents and as our departments support one another internally. It starts with the basics – residents and businesses should find it easy to contact the appropriate person at City Hall and then expect prompt, courteous responses as we try to solve your problems. We will be partners to help everyone navigate processes, and make things happen. This also includes completely revamping our city’s website to make it far more user-friendly. We also must do a better job within City Hall to build the infrastructure that, in turn, will enable us to better serve our residents. Therefore, throughout our city departments, we will assist one another internally with greatly enhanced information technology, support, and training for employees. I am fortunate to be able to lead such a great team of city employees, and I am excited to provide them with the tools and resources they need to flourish.

Third, from day one, and throughout the next four years, we will be out in the community talking to residents and business owners and listening to their concerns. New ideas will be encouraged and supported, with the expectation that each idea will identify a challenge or opportunity for improvement, have a well-thought-out implementation process, and use data to measure success or failure. We will strive to keep our mistakes small, but we will own and learn from them when they inevitably happen.

How can you help

So, how can you help? Sixty-five years ago, John F. Kennedy famously said in his Inaugural Address "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can

do for your country." Today, I am echoing his profound words and inviting everyone in this city to reflect not only on what Newton can do for you, but what you can do for Newton.

We face a crisis of loneliness in this nation - our children spend far too much time on their screens and adults report an increased sense of isolation. That insularity also contributes to an unhealthy dialogue when we are faced with difficult community decisions. But it does not have to be this way. Here in Newton, we can help break that cycle, creating a happier, healthier community. Newton will flourish, and we will build a stronger community together, when every resident feels seen, heard, and valued – and we can roll up our sleeves and do this work together.

Many of you are already engaged in important community work: serving on the city's boards and commissions, Neighborhood Area Councils, and local neighborhood associations; helping non-profits like the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, Historic Newton, Understanding our Differences, Green Newton, the Newton Conservators, Welcome Home, Family Access, Cradles to Crayons, the Newton Food Pantry and Centre Street Food Pantry, Spark Newton and so many more; supporting churches, synagogues, and events such as Lunar New Year, Pride Flag Raising, Juneteenth, and Diwali celebrations; and leading organizations that help our youth like Little League, Newton Youth Soccer, Newton Girls Soccer, Bluefish, and the Scouts.

But there is so much more to do. I believe in Newton and believe in the power of the people – all the people – in this city to work collectively, collaboratively, and inclusively to build on our past successes to have an even brighter future. Our Administration will lead this effort.

Whether you have lived here for generations or arrived more recently, whether you are young or old, a renter or a homeowner, a parent of school-aged children or an older adult - Newton belongs to all of us. Together, we will ensure that no one feels marginalized. Together, we will ensure that everyone can fully participate in our community life. Together, we will lend a hand to one another. Together, we will have opportunities for pleasure, joy, and, yes, fun. Together, we will create a stronger, more vibrant city.

My fellow Newtonians, I am honored and humbled to be your next Mayor.