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## Finch declares Bridgeport on the upswing

Keila Torres Ocasio Updated 8:23 pm, Thursday, March 12, 2015

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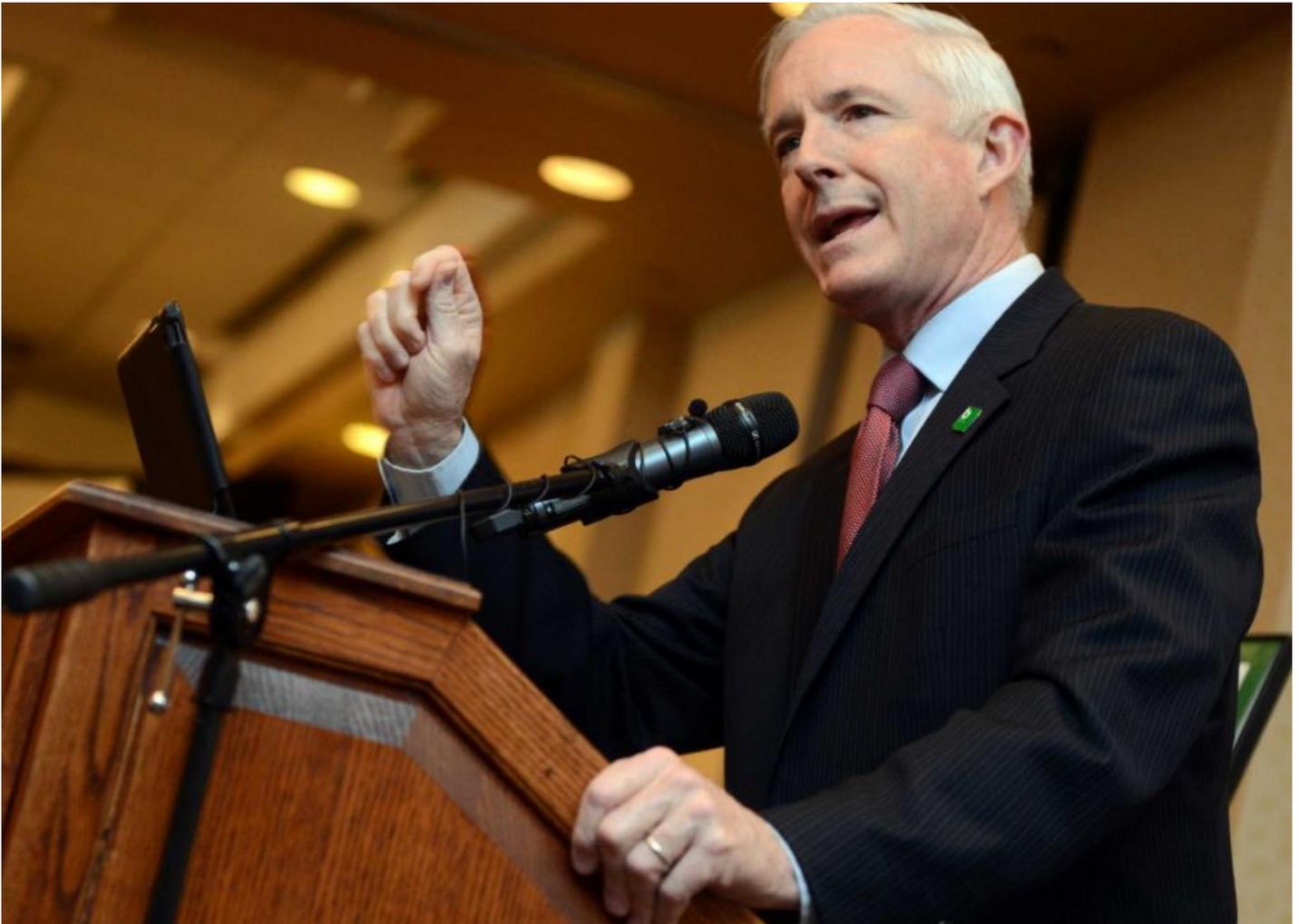


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Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch gives his State of the City address Thursday, Mar. 12, 2015 at the Holiday Inn in Bridgeport, Conn.

BRIDGEPORT -- He's not called the green mayor for nothing.

In his State of the City address to the business community Thursday, Mayor **Bill Finch** recycled a list of accomplishments he has cited in past speeches, including progress on Steel Point and the downtown revitalization.

The mayor did not, however, talk about his 2015-16 budget, which he will submit to the City Council next month, or his plans for this year's mayoral election. But folders filled with campaign-like propoganda, some containing large pictures of Finch, were handed out at the event.

"I'm proud to say that the state of the city is strong and getting stronger every day," Finch said.

Before his speech, the mayor showed the audience a short video of the commercials the city has used as part of a new \$250,000 marketing campaign.

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Then, as if preparing his campaign pitch, he recapped his two terms in office, citing everything from the creation of an eco-technology park to the proposal of a second train station in the city.

Finch, who noted that he is co-chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors **Climate Protection** Task Force, focused a significant amount of time on the city's "green" projects. As he has in the past, he noted the city in 2013 installed the largest fuel cell in North America on State Street. He also cited future plans to put another fuel cell and solar panel in the old landfill at Seaside Park.

Finch also noted two more recent accomplishments.

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Late last year, right around the time construction started at Bass Pro Shops, it was announced that Starbucks and Chipotle would be joining the anchor tenant on the Steel Point peninsula.

Several months earlier, and after years of trying, Finch was finally able to reopen Pleasure Beach to the public.

After his remarks, Finch took a few questions from those in attendance.

**Doug Wade**, president of Wade's Dairy, asked what business owners could do to help the city move its BGreen 2020 sustainability plan forward.

"Recycle," Finch replied, before mentioning that the businesses could also see whether they are on a proposed thermal loop's path. A thermal loop is a method of heating and cooling public and private buildings that uses a series of underground pipes to transfer steam or water from a source to a building.

The mayor was also asked where he sees the city in the next 10 years.

Finch said he would like to see a fleet of electric buses running in the city, the creation of two or three more fuel cells and an improvement in the city's high school graduation rate. "We're creating a lot of jobs but we're not sure our kids can qualify for them," he said.

**Tim Bartlett**, district executive director for the Bridgeport YMCA, said he thought Finch's speech was "his best yet."

"Everything he's done with the eco-technology park is really putting us on the map again," he said.

Wade said he's been hearing about how Bridgeport is getting better for years. "And I think it's really happening now," he said, adding that he's glad to have his business in the city. "I feel the energy and I really believe Bridgeport is on the cusp of big things coming."

**George Mintz**, president of the **Bridgeport NAACP** branch, said he was glad Finch mentioned his efforts to recruit a new and diverse class of police officers.

"I'm encouraged by the fact that he is willing to come to the table and talk about the diversification of the **Bridgeport Police Department**," Mintz said.

In attendance at the event was also former Mayor **Joseph Ganim**, who mingled with the crowd. Ganim, who served seven years in prison for corruption stemming from his time in office, has been making the rounds throughout the city as he explores another run for mayor.

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