

State of the City



SPEAKER'S NOTES

Prepared for delivery Feb. 9, 2017, at the weekly meeting of the Frayser Exchange Club at Impact Baptist Church.

Mayor Jim Strickland

OPENING

Recognition

- Senior leadership team, administration
- Memphis City Council
- Other elected officials

Thank Frayser Exchange Club

- Shelly Rice
- Impact Baptist Church, Pastor Michael C. Ellis, who is doing great work in our city.
- Club is a great example of how people can come together and fight for our city.

One year ago -- or 13 months and 9 days ago, to be exact -- I told you at my swearing in that we were bringing **new eyes to solve old problems.**

It has not always been easy. It has not been without its surprises. And it has not been without its frustrations.

But one thing has been consistent: We are continuing to bring these new eyes to these old problems. We are taking real, tangible action for the future of Memphis, and **we are getting results.**

For all of that, and for everyone in Memphis who is fighting for a better future for their neighborhoods -- like right here in Frayser -- and for everyone in Memphis who is at the forefront of the renaissance that we are seeing, I am proud to say to you today that **the state of our city is strong -- and getting even stronger.**

Today in Memphis, I am proud to report:

- There is some **\$7 billion** in recently completed, under construction, or on-the-drawing board **development** -- much of which is going toward re-imagining historic assets. And it's the vast majority of some **\$9 billion** in development happening in our entire metro area.
- **I'm proud to report** that just down Watkins, the **Crosstown Concourse** building -- which I was proud to support on the City Council -- is occupied for the first time in a quarter century.
- **I'm proud that ServiceMaster** is not only staying in Memphis with its 1,200 jobs -- which is most important -- but it is moving Downtown to what was an empty building and will begin moving in this spring.
- **I'm proud that St. Jude's** life-saving work is growing in Memphis, Tennessee -- bringing more than 1,800 good jobs, billions in development, and most importantly, advancing the cure for childhood cancer.
- **I'm proud** that when you dial **911** with your most crucial phone call, we answer -- now under 14 seconds, down from one minute it took to answer when we took office.
- **I'm proud that minority and women-owned businesses** are getting a larger slice of city contract spending -- up **30 percent** in just one year. And just a few days ago, I was fortunate to hear from four small business owners who graduated from one of the new programs we've put in place to help MWBEs succeed outside of the walls of city government.

- **I'm happy that** unemployment is consistently at its lowest levels in a decade.
- **I'm proud that we're paving more streets**, filling more potholes. **EXAMPLE:** In our first fiscal year in office, we'll pave **39.5 lane miles** of streets in District 7. A year before that, the city paved **11.6 lane miles** of streets in District 7. Soon, you'll see repaving of parts of Overton Crossing, of Hawkins Mill, and in the Nu-Van subdivision.
- **I'm proud of our fiscal situation** -- **Comptroller letter** from last summer ("If you continue on this path, Memphis will reclaim its rightful place among the truly vibrant cities of the world."). And, the **bond agencies** upgraded our status.

It's a lot to be proud of.

I don't know the last time we've been able to brag on so much in Memphis.

And here's a big reason why: Our partnership with the **City Council** -- 13 people who care deeply about our city.

- We worked together on our budget, and it passed in 7 minutes last year -- unheard of
- Constant communication
- Collaborative attitude for the good of Memphis

This is all great news.

Yet I also know this: Our challenges are real, they are critical, and they're being tackled every day at City Hall.

This is why I tell people I commit to being "brilliant at the basics" of city government. My vision of city government is to commit to dependable core city services, so as to allow all the great things that are going on in Memphis to multiply even more.

Or, I'll put it another way: We want to take care of our end of the bargain so the private sector can take care of its end of the bargain -- create jobs and grow our economy.

No question about it, the most important role for city government to play is to provide for public safety.

To prioritize that, we must be crystal-clear about the challenge. In 2016, we saw it up close: While property crime fell slightly, violent crime rose 3.2 percent -- and we all know that we set an awful record with our homicide rate.

Update on police officer staffing situation:

- Tomorrow night, I'll be proud to stand in front of our newest Memphis police officers. A class of 31 recruits is finishing up at the academy this week and will join the force immediately.
- You heard we had a huge group of applicants last year -- 2,000, when we normally have 500 in a year. They are geared toward the recruit class that begins next month -- and we are hoping to have more than 100.
- We're hoping to have another 100 or so in the class after that, which begins in September.
- Yes, we inherited a challenge on that front. Let me color that challenge a bit: From 2008 to 2011, we graduated 728 police officers from our academy. From 2012 to 2015, we graduated 162. And in 2014, we did not have a single class.
- But here's the good news: We're hoping that in the next 12 months, we will have a net increase in police officers for the first time in six years.
- We are taking the long-term actions to restore the pipeline of police recruits so that we don't face this situation again.

But that's not all. Here are a couple of new things:

- **Violent crimes bureau** was recently launched by Director Rallings, and it is up and active.
 - It's a reorganization that provides a more focused investigation of our most serious crimes.
 - It improves communication between patrol and investigations

- We believe it will lead to higher arrest and conviction rates
- Our goal: To investigate, identify, arrest and convict the more violent and repeat offenders, to get them off the streets
- In addition to the violent crimes bureau, I'm also proud to announce that we are doubling what we do in **street-level gang intervention** through the 901 BLOC Squad.
 - The program was launched a few years ago in Frayser and in South Memphis.
 - We've seen a 32 percent reduction in youth violence in Frayser.
 - We're going to take what works and multiply it. We're now taking it to Orange Mound and the Mt. Moriah corridor.
 - And then, I am committing to doubling their efforts by the summer.
 - We will look to expand it again after that.

Yet, it is not all about police officers and Mike Rallings. If anyone tells you that's all my crime plan entails, then that tells you that they're not listening.

- Beginning Memorial Day, our libraries will be open longer hours. And that's on top of last year, where just at the Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library alone, we served 8,000 teens -- up from 5,400 a year earlier.
- For the first time, we will have spring break camps at our community centers.
- On April 20 -- mark your calendars -- we'll be partnering with the My Brother's Keeper Alliance to bring the "Pathways to Success: Boys and Young Men of Color Opportunity Summit" to Memphis. It's a job fair for individuals between the ages of 16 and 29. It's President Obama's national initiative, and these job fairs have been held in other cities such as Detroit and Oakland with great success.
- We continue our **youth programming** and are always looking for ways to expand it. It is making a difference. Consider this letter that was passed along to me the other day from a mother of a summer program participant: "I must say that you all have done a great job in developing a sense of responsibility, work ethic, and all-around change in his life perception. You've helped keep him out of the street, jail, and negative environments. And I thank you all for that 'cause my son has changed for the better. He

wants to work. Enjoys it. And the speakers you all have are really jogging his mind. It has made him a better young man.”

- Yesterday, we started the lottery process for the next round of MPLOY and MAP jobs, which will enable some 1,400 of our young people to have the same opportunity as this young man.

This is how city government is making a difference in the lives of young people. Here's just one example of how we're making an even broader difference: Through a **down payment assistance program** we launched last year, we've helped 65 families buy homes in some of our neighborhoods that need the anchor of home ownership the most.

That's what government is doing -- and it is a lot, and we will do more. But in order for us to succeed, we all must pull our weight.

That's why I have issued our Call to Action:

- Mentor:
 - 1) Mentored youth are 52 percent more likely to stay in school and complete more homework than non-mentored youth.
 - 2) At-risk youth with mentors are 55 percent more likely to be enrolled in college than those without a mentor.
- Read -- second grade is critical year
- Adopt a block

To learn how to get involved, visit **memphistn.gov/calltoaction** -- or look for the cards on the table.

Join those who are already doing great work in our community. Today we are at Impact Baptist Church, which is holding an open house this week about all the great things it's helping to do in the community. Our Workforce Investment Network is here, HopeWorks is here, and Boys & Girls scout troops are here -- and that's just the tip of the iceberg. Pastor Ellis, you are an example of someone who is answering the Lord's call to action every day for the betterment of Memphis, and I thank you.

And I'll leave you with a little story about something we announced last September -- a partnership called the **Work Local** program. We're partnering with the Hospitality HUB Downtown, using city money, to hire homeless and panhandlers and offer them work at \$9/ hour -- and offer social services from the Hospitality HUB.

This is what we've accomplished:

- **100** individual shifts worked
- **69** total program participants
- **5** job training program enrollments
- **3** permanent job placements

And this just started in November, and it's just two days a week right now.

Some words from program participants:

1. "Today was my second Work Local shift -- if I can work two more days, I'll have enough money to renew my nursing license so I can get a good job and get back on my feet." -- L.T.
2. "I think this is a great program. I'd do it every day if it was available." -- A.J.

This is why we're here, and this is why I'm asking you to get involved, too.

You may not be able to drive a van around two days a week, but I bet you have an hour to mentor a young person, an hour to read to a kid, or some weekend days this year to Adopt a Block.

Help us make Memphis a better place.

We are a city that is changing the world. We're changing it through our creativity, we're changing it through our soul, and we're changing it with the real impact government is making in the lives of Memphians in all corners of our city, from all walks of life.

I ask that you join us in this change, and be part of the great change that is to come in Memphis.

Thank you.