

State of the City 2007

Delivered by Mayor Pam Iorio

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Each year we use the opportunity of the State of the City address to take stock of our progress.

Our job is to solve problems.

To make our city a better place.

To use tax dollars wisely, re-investing in the community for a better quality of life.

To plan for the future.

We set a course four years ago to make Tampa a more livable city – to invest in the basics – to focus on every neighborhood.

And we can proudly report that in this fourth State of the City, we continue to improve our city, making progress in our neighborhoods, in economic development, in East Tampa and other economically challenged areas, in downtown revitalization, in the arts, and through community partnerships.

We have set our goals and are achieving them, one year at a time.

I am particularly proud of our drop in the crime rate. In the past year Tampa's crime rate has dropped another 9.4%, bringing our total reduction to 36% over the last four years. This is a remarkable accomplishment and is the most significant factor in our quality of life measurements.

You have seen construction underway throughout the city- that's because we are fulfilling our promise to fix long-standing drainage problems and repair crumbling water and sewer pipes.

When we broke ground this year on the Bridge portion of 40th Street, residents could finally see tangible progress on a road that has needed widening and improvement for more than four decades.

We just broke ground on a new recreation center in New Tampa, and when we cut the ribbon on the new Hunt Center at Al Lopez Park, area residents couldn't wait to start using this wonderful new facility.

Last year I spoke of accomplishing two goals – approval of The Heights Project and of designating Central Park a Community Redevelopment Area. We have

accomplished both. I thank the County for their partnership in revitalizing Central Park. The approval of these two projects will forever change our community for the better.

Look at what is occurring in the Channel District – with residential projects being built and a strategic plan for the District adopted. And look at the progress that has been made in the downtown Franklin Street area – residents will soon be moving into Skypoint and they broke ground last month on a second residential tower - the Element. People are living in the Residences and the Arlington, enjoying a new kind of urban lifestyle.

Our City Council just approved a financing plan using the growth of our tax base downtown to invest in park and street improvements. We will one day have a walkable, beautiful downtown – one that serves both residents and visitors.

East Tampa continues to be a neighborhood for new investment. Meridian Pointe apartments opened, Fast Lane Clothing is under construction, and the city purchased Gene’s Bar as a site for positive redevelopment. Lake Avenue has been transformed, the new District 3 Police Station is under construction, and Cyrus Greene Park and Highland Pines Park were completed. With the help and support of an involved group of community leaders, we are making tremendous progress in a short period of time.

And in West Tampa the city took ownership of Centro Espanol and will ensure that this special historical asset is used for the good of the community.

Last year we set as a goal a new home for the Tampa Museum of Art – it was also accomplished.

There is a new home, a new architect and a plan for a new museum that will be under construction by the end of this year.

We are proud of all of the cultural institutions that truly make Tampa a City of the Arts. Our Lights On initiative had its final installation and it has been recognized as an innovative program throughout the nation. And the new Mayor’s Arts Education Fund encourages support of art and music programs in our schools.

This past weekend I attended the Antiquarian Book Festival and came across this promotional pamphlet extolling the virtues of Tampa – as a Gateway to the Panama Canal. Written I believe in 1930, this brochure said this about Tampa –

“Come to Tampa, where the frigid tale of winter becomes a sparkling poem of spring. Come where cold and coughs are forgotten in the irresistible and joyous impulse to dance and sing and play.”

Well, maybe we would phrase that differently today.
Today we call Tampa one of the most livable cities in the country.
And we are proud of this city we call home.

In closing I want to offer special thanks.

First, to the employees of our city. Look at the long list of accomplishments of the past year and take pride in the role you have played in making life better for our citizens. You are true public servants and I am proud to serve with you.

Second, today marks the last State of the City reporting for some of our Council members. I thank them for their dedication to the public, for their work that will leave a lasting impact on our city. It has been a pleasure to work with each of you, to have served in a true partnership. To Council members Alvarez, Harrison, Reddick and Fletcher - I thank you for your service and wish you all the best.

In three weeks we mark the start of a second term with a new City Council. On April 1 we will lay out our agenda for the next four years. Much lies ahead. But today we take the pulse of our city –
Look at the accomplishments of the past twelve months
And declare confidently that the state of our city is good.

Thank you.

Pam Iorio
March 12, 2007