

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

"Progress"

Let me first thank God for this day and this moment.

Thanks to all of you for joining us for this 2021 Virtual State of the City Address.

A special thanks to my colleagues on the City Council, staff at the Mayor's Office, department heads, supervisors, and city employees for their ongoing support, commitment, and dedication to the good work being done here in the City of Greenville.

And of course, thank you, First Lady, Eriel, Errick, Elin, mom, my family, and staff at Simmons and Simmons Law Firm for your unconditional love and unwavering support.

Tonight, I stand confident in saying the State of our City is strong.

2020 was a challenging year. Despite its challenge and its threats, we are still strong. We faced a threat on four fronts. On one front, we faced the new coronavirus pandemic and on another we faced a record hurricane season coupled with major storms; thirdly, the terrible impact on our city revenues, jobs, and healthcare from the pandemic, and fourthly, the country continues to live in race pandemic, where we see the deaths of innocent black people targeted specifically because of their race, often by police officers.

Last year, we stood in solidarity and unity for America's promise of freedom, justice, and equity after the death of George Floyd and several incidents of police brutality.

To move forward from the devastation of COVID-19 and all of these threats, we must more closely embrace one another and be of greater support to our neighbors, our families, and our friends.

We must continually pray and come together as a community, as a city and as children of an awesome God whose protections have no doubt kept many of us safe as we mistakenly dropped our guards at some point or another and could have been exposed to the virus, that have taken the lives of too many in this community and far too many in this country.

Having been shown the frailties of life by an unseen virus that reminds of us James 4:14, that says life is but a vapor in time, I urge and ask every Greenville resident to please, at your earliest convenience take the COVID-19 vaccinations. You'll save not only your own lives, but those of loved ones as well.

And please continue to wear your masks until medical professionals and scientists tell us it's safe to take them off. I know we will all do what is best for the health and safety of all of us because we as Greenville, are connected at the heart, connected by our strength.

Our greatest strength is our spirit of togetherness and our collective ability to respond to crisis, to lend helping hands to those in need, and to bounce back stronger than ever.

And for that reason, I am truly honored, humbled, and thankful for the support of this community and for the opportunity to serve our great city of Greenville.

When you gave me your vote of confidence five years ago, you demanded fiscal responsibility. I am proud to stand before you tonight and say that we passed a balanced budget five years to meet local budget needs and fund critical services like public infrastructure and public safety.

The past five years have sailed by, but not without some good news for residents of Greenville. We, as One People, with One Goal, for One Greenville, have taken important first steps toward making Greenville a better place to live, work, and play. With over \$250 million in new investments during this administration, I look forward to another productive year as mayor of this great city.

I have spent the past five years as mayor working to unify the community and create the appropriate friendly climate for economic competitiveness and investment.

We are proud to say that the City of Greenville is open for business for all; and every citizen and visitor is valued, respected, and will be treated equal in the City of Greenville. Diversity, inclusion, and equality for all are critical pieces for vitality of our city.

We are proud that folks inside and outside of Mississippi join our bold, courageous state leaders who took the charge to change our State's flag. We thank Senate Minority Leader Derrick T. Simmons and Representatives Willie Bailey and John

Hines, our state delegation, and Lt. Governor Delbert Hoseman and Speaker Philip Gunn, for leading the way for a more progressive, inclusive Mississippi.

A Land of Opportunity and the Heart and Soul of this Country

For generations, Greenville has been a land of opportunity and the heart and soul of this country. In the past State of the City Addresses, we dedicated them to true ambassadors who epitomized a land of opportunity and the heart of soul of this country.

Tonight, we dedicate this State of the City of Address to you-our healthcare workers and first responders who risk their lives to save our lives during a strange new normal during this global coronavirus pandemic.

You are our true ambassadors. You are the perfect picture of a land of opportunity and the heart and soul of this country. You are the “progress”. And when one worries that progress has outstripped the human capacity to live together, to work together, to dream together the possibilities for our future, I simply say to them: Come to Greenville.

Come to a city that represents the heart, soul, culture, compassion, opportunity, talent, and tenacity of a people that offers an unprecedented interplay between challenges and opportunities; unity and love.

Working Together to Unify and Help Others

Last year, we have seen fellow Greenvillians working together to unify the community and lending helping hands to our neighbors here and around the country. From a global COVID-19 pandemic to Hurricane Laura, I have truly seen One Greenville in action. The several acts of kindness and donations and the display of love for thy neighbor symbolize who Greenville really is: One Greenville. A special thanks goes out to our residents and businesses, volunteers, fire and police departments, sheriff’s department, emergency management, public works crews Oakes Toyota, WWISCAA, Mayor’s Health Council, American Red Cross, Community Foundation of Washington County, MACE, Mississippi Gulf Coast Veterans, Hearty Helpings Food Pantry, churches, civic and social groups, along with our county, state, and federal partners and all who assisted with various efforts for the poor, elderly, disabled, displaced, vulnerable, and those in need.

Thanks to all of you.

Our Volunteerism and Community Service

Through their volunteerism and service, the City of Greenville collectively through our various organizations responded to the pandemic with more than one million pounds of food donations, more than 100,000 face masks and protective gear, thousands of COVID-19 testing and school supplies.

Greenville's greatest asset is its ability to show compassion for others. This is the Greenville we know. This is the Greenville we all love.

More than \$250 Million in New Investments

With more \$250 million in new investments, the City of Greenville is reemerging back to a place of entertainment, economic development, tourism, and hospitality for all. Greenville is moving forward with more than \$250 million dollars in local, state, and federal investments, including the \$142 million dollar Greenville Freight Corridor inclusive of a \$71.46 million grant from U.S Department of Transportation, with \$70 million match from MDOT, an announcement we made last summer with MDOT Commissioner Willie Simmons. A \$40.1 new federal courthouse, which the Greenville Council recently voted to name after Fannie Lou Hammer, a person who lived a life and legacy of justice, fairness, and equality. Reserves at Ed Gray, a \$6 million dollar project, now houses 42 low to moderate income families after the Greenville City Council donated a city park. The evolution of the Mars Food/Ben's Original brand produced an investment of \$2.5 million dollars to improve education and access to fresh healthy foods with the first-ever Community Engagement Officer here in Greenville. A \$2 million Colorado Medical Expansion Project; and, \$850,000 workforce development investment for career tech buildings at our community college. Last week, we announced \$5.8 million dollar Westport Linen investment that creates 75 new jobs while retaining 75 others. Investments continued throughout the city and great things are happening.

The State of our City is strong.

\$100 Million in Public Infrastructure

Infrastructure and public safety remain a top priority. Public infrastructure is a quality-of-life issue and is vital to economic development, industry retention, and recruitment. Under the current administration, more than \$100 million in local, state, and federal monies have been spent to fix our aging infrastructure. We have spent more than \$50 million in rehabilitation and other sanitary sewer infrastructure. \$29

million for sanitary sewer improvements with \$7.7 million dollar grant from U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development. \$16 million for airport improvements with better service to Dallas and \$7 million spent on our WWTP, \$5 million on Hancock Force Main; \$5 million spread throughout our major thoroughfares with new traffic signals, signage, and utility boxes thanks to our MDOT; over \$2 million spent for repairs on Reed Road, millions for new fire trucks, police vehicles, and state-of-the-art public safety communications equipment.

New and Innovative Programs

MICD

New and innovative programs are on the rise in the City of Greenville. It was indeed a privilege to be selected in the inaugural Mayor's Institute of City Design Just City Mayoral Fellowship with the Just City Lab at Harvard Graduate School of Design to work with my colleagues and national design experts across the country to discuss and implement strategies to create just, sustainable neighborhoods and communities.

GREAT

Our re-entry program, GREAT, Greenville Reentry and Training Program (GREAT) has grown exponentially to provide job opportunities and training for returning citizens looking for a new lease on life. Not only is this a workforce program, it is a social justice program providing previously inaccessible opportunities and training to those most in need disrupting the cycle of poverty and incarceration. The City hired its first returning citizen with the City of Greenville on March 1, 2018. Moreover, the City has banned the box as importance is placed heavily on the skills to the job versus on the ills of one's past.

We have impending, exciting news on college access and education.

With a skilled and work ready community, businesses around the world know what we can offer when it comes to employment. I am proud to say tonight that the City of Greenville has a strong workforce. To any company, to any investor, developer, entrepreneur who is looking for a place to locate, as the Queen City of the Delta, Greenville is your place.

Delta P2P

The City continues to host over 2,000 8th graders from the Delta for a 2-day Career Expo, which was cancelled last year and is going virtual this year due COVID.

The Mindset is Changing

Great things are happening in Greenville. We are growing beyond our local and regional perimeters. Contemporary planning demands that we think globally like the river that runs down her side and her rice that is found in every city, country, and continent in the World.

We have to showcase what Greenville has to offer to continue to attract people and businesses.

Greenville is one the Southeast's Top Visitors' Destination with World-class Festivals and Events

We must continue to highlight our warm hospitality, history, culture, fine dining, food, entertainment, festivals, and the arts. These amenities should be the selling points out of every resident's mouth here in Greenville.

The Hot Tamale Capital of the World, Greenville, is one of the Southeast's top visitor destinations, bolstering historic, cultural, and wildlife attractions. The Delta Hot Tamale Festival expands to cover seven city blocks with close to 24,000 in attendance, with an economic impact of over \$5 million.

The Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival, the oldest continuous running blues festival in the world, has an economic impact of over \$3 million dollars, with every hotel, motel, inn, and restaurant at capacity throughout the Delta bringing music lovers from around the world.

The Mississippi River Marathon continues to bring runners from around the world approaching its 10th year next year.

Ferguson on Fire fires up the levee front, the Delta Dragon Boat Festival returns, National Croupe Tournament catches the best fish and national spotlight in the country. We thank all organizers and sponsors of these events.

Greek Community Fest has kicked off a fun-filled, family-oriented weekend hosted by the Divine 9.

Black Heritage Rodeo presents a cultural, educational experience of horseback riding that brings thousands to Greenville.

Greenville Arts Council and Delta Center Stage host galleries, workshops, plays, and other events for the whole family to enjoy. The carousel, the public/private

partnership around the renovation, the visual arts programming, of course the community theatre put arts in the forefront of education and community development.

Outside this building, Mississippi Writers Trail markers were erected for Shelby Foote and Walker Percy in October.

Greenville provides a wealth of great places to live, eat, and play.

Workforce Development

Regionalism is key to economic development and workforce development success. And we have made major strides in these areas. For too long, Delta cities and towns failed to collaborate on economic development projects. I am proud to say tonight the conversations and collaborations are happening. Thanks to the leadership of Delta Council, economic development organizations, South Delta Planning Development District, Local Government Leadership Institute, businesses, Delta counties, cities, and other partners, the Mississippi Delta is now Delta Strong, which is a Mississippi Delta marketing initiative recruiting small to mid-size manufacturers looking to expand their operations between 50 to 250 employees.

Now, companies around the world can go to the Delta Strong website to see available buildings and land sites in the MS Delta ready for business.

Washington County Economic Alliance

The Washington County Economic Alliance and the city have worked together to create tangible illustrations, social media campaigns and posts, complete with information about what the city has to offer.

This is a new approach, and everyone plays a part in it. Talking about the good in Greenville is imperative. To make the city more competitive when it comes to the workforce development, the WCEA has made Greenville and Washington County an ACT Work Ready Community.

GPSD

Greenville Public School District has created early college opportunity for our high school students at both Mississippi Valley State University and MS Delta Community College.

Western Line School District

Western Line School District has more students enrolled for Jobs for Mississippi Grads and a “going to college” culture has been created.

Bennie G. Thompson’s Second Congressional District College and Career Fair

A special thanks to Congressman Bennie G. Thompson for his annual College and Career Fair with 27 high schools registered, serving more than 2,200 students.

Model Contractor Development Program

Thanks to Congressional Thompson, Gene Finley, Mississippi Development Authority’s Small Business Administration, Washington County, and other partners, the city is providing opportunities for small, minority-owned, and women-owned businesses to apply for state contracts and federal contracts and partnering with the City in hosting the Delta Small and Emerging Business Conference for small, women-owned, and minority businesses.

Public Safety

Without question, public safety remains a top priority of this administration. Millions have been spent for new fire trucks, police vehicles, and state-of-the-art public safety communications equipment. Thanks goes to the men and women of our police and fire departments who protect and serve us on a daily basis.

- Our police officers wear body cameras to increase accountability for police and residents.
- More than 9,000 smoke alarms have been installed in residential properties by our fire department.
- Fire and Life Safety Festival continues along with the fire safety poster contest, and other community risk reduction programs.
- Fire and Police Junior Kids Academies continue.

Parks

Our parks continue to provide more recreational activities for our youth and initiate an array of events and programs to people of all ages. Thanks to the Greenville Park Commission and the Greenville City Council for understanding the value of parks and recreation in our community. After a pause last year due to COVID, we look forward to 2021 in our parks and recreation.

Airport improvements (Picture of Boutique Air with Chart)

We look forward to fully returning our flights at the Greenville Mid-Delta Airport to full capacity. People from around the Delta, the State, and entire Southeast region choose BOUTIQUE AIR to meet their air service needs. Air service to the east by way of Nashville (a returning flight) and the west by way of Dallas is the way to fly. The airport has received over \$20 million dollars in airport improvements under the current administration. Thanks to Congressman Thompson, Senators Wicker, Cochran, Hyde-Smith, and our state and regional officials.

We are flying higher under the leadership at the Airport with the return of Aviation Day for our residents and visitors.

Other accomplishments

Other accomplishments include our nationally recognized, award-winning interfaith, interracial initiative, Worship on the Water. Worship on the Water was recognized by the United States Conference of Mayors as a 2017 City Livability Outstanding Achiever, which was one of only five initiatives nationwide to be so honored. It fosters community and promotes unity in the city every 5th Sunday of the month on the waterfront. Due to Covid, we have begun to virtually host Worship on the Water.

In the same spirit, the Annual Mayor's Prayer Luncheon will continue this year virtually at this time after last year's cancellation due to Covid.

Greenspace

The City is moving forward to create a state-of-the-art greenspace downtown with the Greenville City Council officially selecting the 500 block at last week's Council meeting.

Unprecedented Natural Disaster with Severe Weather Storm Event

Last week, our city, as well as over 40 cities, towns, and water associations/districts in Mississippi, and hundreds in a seven-state area experienced no to low water pressure due to an unprecedented natural disaster for a week. Some of those were caused by frozen system parts and others lost of power due to severe weather storm event.

As has happened on numerous occasions when the City has faced many unprecedented natural disasters and operational challenges, we look at cause and

effect. What caused the operational challenge or failure, natural or manmade. We will look at what improvements need to be made, physically to the infrastructure, and/or operational.

Over the next 10 months our Public Works leadership will be taking part in a Federally Mandated(American Water Infrastructure Act of 2018) review of the water system vulnerabilities to develop a Risk Assessment, and then developing an updated Emergency Response Plan.

This is an "All Hazards Approach" that looks at vulnerabilities to natural and man made hazards to the water system. This is not the first time the utility has undertaken this process, with the result that the system has a majority of its production facilities monitored by a SCADA system, and that all the Production Wells currently have Natural Gas fired generators and modernized controls.

As this incident was different than past Cold-Weather incidents in the depth of the temperature drop and length of the event, that will need to be considered in any mitigation efforts undertaken by the city in response to this event.

I am increasingly impressed with the collective response of our first responders, emergency management personnel, local city and county elected officials, our businesses, social, civic, faith-based, and community organizations who responded to meet the needs of our people during this unprecedented crisis.

Conclusion

The State of our City is strong because of you. You are the progress. Progress is Greenville. Progress is not inevitable. It's up to us to create it. The strength of our city lies in our ability to work together, to move forward together, to improve the quality and quantity of life for all together.

Tonight, I say thank you. Thanks to each of you for all you do to make Greenville a great place to live, work, and play.

I'm proud of the progress we've made together.

We, as One People, with One Goal, for One Greenville, must keep moving to create PROGRESS.

Thank You.