

Mayor Tommy Fortenberry
City of Gautier State of the City Address

Thank all of you for being here today. I especially want to thank Hancock Bank, our City Staff and everyone with the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College for organizing this affair.

This is my third State of the City address, and the third town hall meeting in the history of our City. We felt it was fitting this year to hold the town hall meeting at the college, for its recognition as one of the top ten community college's in the nation. We are proud of our college.

And today, I am here to tell you that just like the growth of this town hall event, the state of our city is coming into its own. This is the year of shovels in the ground, building dedications and ribbon cuttings. This year, we will realize new projects that will encourage future development for years to come.

2012 is going to be a year of unprecedented success and progress. Major community projects that have floundered for years have received new leadership and are finally coming to fruition. These are not merely promises.

Consider the following:

- We'll have the widening of Martin Bluff Road with bicycle lane and sidewalk.
- We'll restore natural spring-fed tributaries and hold our festivals on a new 32-acre Town Green.
- We'll have the ribbon cutting for the Town Center Streetscape Project with 5 miles of multi-use sidewalk.
- We'll have the ribbon cutting for a 2-lane traffic roundabout with a 3-story wetlands statue and fountain.
- We'll have an LED town center sign to broadcast community events.
- We'll commemorate our Veterans Tribute Tower in front of City Hall.
- We'll cut the ribbon on a new Court and Justice Building in our Town Center.
- We'll cut the ribbon on a new Fire station on Highway 57 to serve the western area of our City.
- We'll cut the ribbon on a new 16-acre medical complex at our Interstate Corridor.
- We'll pave and improve roads throughout the City with last year's \$7 million bond.
- We'll see new city entrance signs and directional signs throughout the City.
- We will complete the City Park Master Plan.
- We'll cut the ribbon on the renovated West Gate Shopping Center.
- We'll realize a redeveloped Singing River Mall.

And lastly my friends,

- We will have clear drinking water for all citizens of Gautier.

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Now, this work has not happened overnight. This Council has worked tirelessly to ensure that we did not lose focus, that we remembered the promises we've made you.

Today, I am here to tell you that Gautier remains focused on implementing the comprehensive plan adopted in 2009. We realize for 25 years you've wanted a Town Center with a central park and gathering place, and we're going to give it to you, entirely funded with grants and private sponsors. We will continue to promote Gautier as "Nature's Playground" as a community for families, with schools that are growing and nationally recognized for their superior excellence.

We're going to be working on our parks and recreation programs. Reaching out to kids and senior to provide better support and grow our sports leagues and recreation opportunities.

Gautier is the first city in the nation to offer a Real Time Crime Alert for iphones that will be rolling out in the weeks ahead. Our Crime Prevention Officer will begin her second year growing neighborhood watch programs in our neighborhoods. And our Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator will begin her second year working with neighborhoods to address concerns and implement projects.

Our efforts to regulate construction in flood zones is expected to provide another drop in flood insurance rates this year. Last year an increase in our Community Rating System means on average a \$166 insurance savings for Gautier families.

Using the last round of Katrina funding, homeowners of blighted mobile homes on Highway 90 are transitioning to better housing. Last year, we abated 36 structures along our highways and pushed properties to take action to clean up their commercial properties from Hurricane Katrina, and we're now seeing results.

Our Public Works Department is overseeing dozens of street and drainage projects, thanks to our in-house civil engineer and Public Works Director, Mr. Dennis Reeves.

By this time next year, we'll see electronic water meters serving Gautier's 6,800-plus water customers, utility billing will be made more efficient, and greater efficiencies will translate into better service for Gautier citizens.

So, there you have it.

Next Samantha Abell, City Manager, will share with you about some of the larger capital projects in the City. Then we want to hear from you, and what you think.

We're going to turn your input into measurable objectives, just as we have in the past. Then this time next year, we'll return and all share in our success as a community making Gautier the best place for families to live on the Coast.

Thank you.