

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

"A Year of Progress"

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

Thank you Sarah for that warm introduction.

Thanks to the Greenville Public School District for hosting tonight's State of the City Address here at Greenville High School.

Thank you Justin, Lilah, Oliver, and Pastor Cantu for participating tonight.

A special thanks to my colleagues on the City Council, departments 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, mom, and my family for your unconditional love and unwavering support.

Thanks to all: our fellow elected and appointed officials, business, religious, and community leaders, economic development professionals, developers, educators, churches, social and civic groups, organizations, agencies, businesses, every resident, citizen, visitor, friend, and supporter whose contributions make Greenville a better place to live, work, and play.

This has been a year of progress.

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

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 the citizens gave me their vote of confidence a year ago, they demanded fiscal responsibility. I am proud to stand before you tonight and say that we passed a balanced budget without raising taxes.

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

At one of the Council's very first meeting, we invited all to our City and declared that the City of Greenville is open for business by taking down the state flag. Later, an equality message was sent to let every citizen and visitor know that you are valued, you are

respected, and you will be treated equal in the City of Greenville. Diversity, inclusion, and equality for all are critical pieces for the vitality of our city.

For generations, Greenville has been a land of opportunity and the heart and soul of the Delta.

Gus Johnson-Land of Opportunity

The land of opportunity is clearly depicted in the story of Gus Johnson, who passed away this year. Gus, affectionately called “Jim” ran the oldest café in Washington County. For decades, folks frequent Jim’s Café to see downtown Greenville, to have a good meal and good conversation, to receive a hug, a smile, a recipe from Gus. Gus was an ambassador of Greenville, always promoting Greenville, a firm believer in downtown Greenville. Even when business was slow and other businesses began to leave, Gus and the Johnson family believed in Greenville and Greenville believed in them. He was the face of Jim’s café and a picture of opportunity in the land of opportunity.

Juanita Turney-Heart and Soul of the Delta

The heart and soul of Greenville is easily portrayed in the late Juanita Turney, who too passed away this year. Ms. Turney was a lady of elegance, class, grace, and intelligence. A longtime educator and lover of the arts, Ms. Turney is remembered for impacting, educating, and helping mold the lives of several thousands of students she taught in Greenville. Ms. Turney was a huge supporter of the arts and attended almost every event that enriched the quality of life for residents in Greenville. She was well known and respected throughout Greenville where she gracefully moved throughout the community. Ms. Turney, an iconic sovereign lady, embodied the spirit of Greenville and was a true source of inspiration to all who knew her and to those who ever met her.

Tonight, I dedicate this first State of the City Address to the late Gus Johnson and the late Juanita Turney, true ambassadors of this city who represent the heart, soul, opportunity, and resilience of Greenville.

The Flood of March 9, 2016

This year I have seen fellow Greenvillians working together to unify the community. Despite the national severe flood disaster of March 9th, the community showed resilience where city, county, state, and federal emergency management officials and first responders came together showing true altruism in a time of need. Greenville received national attention where we were featured on NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt and ABC’s Good

Morning America. Immediately following the flood event, Mayors from the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative, which is a group about 70 mayors on the Mississippi River from Illinois to Louisiana held a press conference here in Greenville to talk about the importance of regional economic development and pre-disaster mitigation funding.

I salute and applaud Tammy Reed and David Burford with the Washington County Office of Emergency Management, Greenville police and fire departments, Washington County Sheriff's Department, Greenville Public School District, FEMA, MEMA, the American Red Cross and other volunteers who immediately responded to the weather emergency.

The Burning of Hopewell Baptist Church

This community pulled together after the burning of Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church. A candle light vigil was immediately organized by members of this community to begin the healing process. Several churches from various faiths, United Methodist, Baptist, Jewish, and others all open their hearts in offering Hopewell and its congregants a place of worship. Thanks to Pastor James Nichols and First Baptist Church who open up their doors for Hopewell to worship. Thanks to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies who diligently work to solve this heinous crime.

And our hearts still go out to the 1 year old and 3 year old toddlers who lost their lives in the house fire this year. Thanks to the Mayor's Youth Council and community members who donated clothes, toys, and other essential items to the family.

These are just some of the challenges and tragedies we faced as a community this year.

Greenville's greatest accomplishment is its ability to care for each other and its ability to bounce back. This is the Greenville we know. This is the Greenville we all love.

Downtown Revitalization

Successful cities have successful downtowns. This year, major announcements have been made to reemerge our downtown back to a place of entertainment, economic development, tourism, and education for all.

Thanks to Developer Bill Boykin and other financial and economic partners, a 9.1 million redevelopment of the historic Sears building will be transformed into a boutique hotel, a restaurant, microbrewery, and workspace. The Downtown Grille will offer a new experience in fine dining downtown Greenville. The old Sears property will become a showcase property for downtown. Suresh Chawla has also announced a 1.2 million dollar renovation of the Roadway Inn into a new Cabot Lodge Hotel equipped with an evening

center and reception. Not to be outdone, a brand new five-star hotel is underway (the when and where are under a confidential clause).

New Federal Courthouse

This year, Congress authorized \$40.1 million dollars for site acquisition, design and construction of a new \$62,000 square foot federal courthouse in Greenville. A \$40.1 million dollar new federal building in Greenville will be a catalyst to economic development. An injection of \$40.1 million will reemerge and revitalize our downtown. This courthouse shows how local and federal partnerships matter. This project in Greenville speaks volumes about President Obama's commitment to maximize federal investments in supporting the economic vision of communities across the country. I applaud the commitments of Senator Thad Cochran, Senator Roger Wicker, Congressman Bennie G. Thompson, and our federal judiciary in the Northern District of Mississippi.

Thanks to the Greenville City Council, Daniel Boggs with Greater Greenville Housing, Bill Boykin, Lisa Percy with Community Foundation of Washington County, a \$200,000 multi-purpose facility will be built downtown. This facility can be used for class reunions, festivals, and other events.

Thanks to Kenneth Dickerson for his purchase of the historic Delta Democrat Times building downtown. This purchase and renovation aid in our revitalization efforts.

Tonight, I am proud to say that every building has been either purchased or leased downtown Greenville. The economic wave is coming downtown and great things are happening in Greenville.

Other Investments and Announcements

I applaud Washington County Opportunity, Inc. Headstart and Early Headstart for \$1.8 million investment in our children for 10 new classrooms for headstart children.

With the help of the City Council and Greater Greenville Housing, a \$5.9 million dollar investment will create 40 new townhouse-style affordable apartments for low to moderate income folks at Ed Gray Park.

To add icing on the cake, Uncle Ben's has announced a \$25 million expansion for research and development.

Governor Bryant came to Greenville to present and recognize Uncle Ben's as a Zero Land Field Site, the first in the State to be a zero-waste site, here in Greenville. After that

announcement, I joined Governor Bryant on a White House Call for Governors about the Zika virus. I was the only mayor on the call with 8 Governors.

If you are counting, that is over 82 million dollars invested in the City of Greenville in the first year of this administration.

Changing the mindset

We are constantly working to change the image in Greenville. We are no longer thinking small town. We have to think globally. For too long we have thought that our competition is Leland, Cleveland, or Jackson, our competition today is Shang Hi, London, and Zurich.

We have to showcase what Greenville has to offer such as our tax abatement programs available in the Central Downtown District. These programs will encourage new businesses to locate in Greenville.

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

Greenville is a land of opportunity.

The Washington County Economic Alliance and the city have been working together to create “deliverable” handouts, complete with information about what the city has to offer and to answer the question Who We Are?

- Greenville is a hub for agribusiness from row-crop production to crop science.
- A thriving port is situated near the mouth of the river on Lake Ferguson.
- Global companies such as Mars Food and USG Interiors call Greenville home.
- Harlow's Casino and Trop Casino Greenville are inviting, exciting venues for gaming and entertainment.
- The Hot Tamale Capital of the World, the City hosts several world-class festivals Hot Tamale Festival, MS Delta Blues Festival, MS Delta Dragon Boat, MS River Maranthon among other.
- Our education system produces the best-over 100 published writers and notable entertainers.

This is a new approach, and everyone plays a part in it. We have to talk about the good in Greenville. To make the city more competitive when it comes to the workforce development, the WCEA has also started its ACT workforce training program. I am proud to announce that Washington County is now certified ACT Work Ready Community. This

certification will support Washington County in economic development, industry recruitment, and bolster existing industry. Washington is the first county in the Delta and the third in the State to receive this certification. I applaud Cary Karlson for his dedication, commitment, and service to the City of Greenville and Washington County.

We are finally putting the horse before the carriage. Problems in the past have included businesses wanting to locate in Greenville but were unable to do so because of the lack of skilled employees available.

With the workforce training program and this certification, businesses will 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.

Regionalism is key to economic development success. 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 Chip Morgan and Frank Howell of Delta Council, economic development organizations, South Delta Planning Development District, businesses, and other partners, the Mississippi Delta is now Delta Strong.

Public Infrastructure and Public Safety

Infrastructure and public safety remain at the forefront. In April, the City entered into a consent decree with the federal government to make \$20.5 million investment in sewer and infrastructure repairs throughout the city. This is long overdue. Folks should not have to deal with sewer in their homes and being unable to flush their toilets. The time is now to begin to get it right. It's a quality of life issue that must be addressed and it is being addressed.

Police Department

In terms of crime, crime is down, all crime is down 35%. Thanks to our men and women in blue. We also have:

- improved police equipment and technology to fight and reduce crime
- increased training in ever division to develop more proficient officers and to reduce liability.
- attached the Gang Unit to the Juvenile Division to address gang activity in the city.
- Thanks to the City Council, 15 new patrol cars have been approved in the 2016-2017 fiscal year budget.

It is one of the City's primary goals to support local businesses while meeting the needs of our citizens. The purchase of 15 patrol cars from James Ceranti marks a renewed city commitment to buy patrol cars locally since it has been over 20 years since the City has done so.

Fire Department

- The City has a brand new 2017 Pierce Enforcer Fire Truck to help for fire protection.
- Training has increased.
- Fire Department installed over 1,700 smoke alarms in the month of April.
- Improved public safety communications with purchase of E911 radio communication equipment.
- Improved for \$99,000 grant for thermal imaging cameras and our very own drone (new technology).

Municipal Court

- I applaud our municipal court staff who have worked diligently and consistently with an outside agency to assist with the collection of all delinquent fines.
- The Amnesty Period was implemented and a substantial amount of fines were collected which cleared hundreds of warrants.
- Municipal Court fine workers also picked up approximately 7,000 bags of trash which provided relief to many resident neighborhoods while keeping our city clean.

State and Federal Partnerships

The City's relationships with our state and federal partners have been tremendously improved as the City has met with state and federal officials, including members of the GSA, two Presidential appointees, U.S. Corp of Engineers, MDOT, MDA, DOJ, Congressman Thompson, Lt. Governor Reeves, and Governor Phil Bryant.

We received a \$901,000 Section 592 grant from the US Corp of Engineers.

The city requested \$9.5 million dollars and will continue to request funding for infrastructure improvements from the State Legislature.

- \$2.9 million for street improvements on Harbor Front Road;
- \$4.6 million for Broadway Street; and
- \$1.5 million for Reed Road, from Canal No. 9 to VFW Road.

The city is especially pushing for funding for Reed Road because it leads to the Delta Sportsplex, which is an economic engine for the city and county.

Airport improvements

It brings me great joy and excitement to announce that folks around the Delta, the State, and entire Southeast are choosing Boutique Air to meet their air service needs. We have had a record amount of folks getting on the plane. Air service to the east by way of Nashville and the west by way of Dallas is the way to fly. Our enplanements have grown from 734 in 2015 to over \$5,000 in 2016.

- All airport firefighters are fully certified in local, state, and federal requirements for airport rescue and fire fighting for the first time in over a decade.
- The airport underwent our annual FAA inspection and passed with no warnings, no deficiencies, and no fines for the first time in many years.
- Taxiway “E” Rehabilitation Project is finished.
- Several grants for water lines, terminal drainage, fire suppression, gates, hanger repairs, airfield drainage and grading have been received.

Also, the City signed an agreement with new Fixed Based Operations charter, Tupelo-based Mid-Delta Aviation. We are on track to more than double the fuel usage from last year because we are servicing more private planes. The airport is in a great place and awesome asset to the City.

Other accomplishments

Other accomplishments include a new faith-based race-reconciliation initiative, Worship on the Water. Worship on the Water is where people from all backgrounds come on the water every 5th Sunday of the month where we are not confined by our church addresses, limited by our denominational identities, or restricted by the color of our skins, but where we come together to acknowledge God.

In the same spirit, the 5th Annual Mayor’s Prayer Luncheon was heavily attended where over 1100 people packed the Convention Center prayed together and ate together.

- The City also transferred a Ford F-150 to Greater Greenville Housing Authority;
- Thanks to the Keep Greenville Beautiful Committee for record collection of trash bags and volunteers during our annual Citywide Cleanup date.
- In collaboration with the Greenville Arts Council and Lowe’s, the City launched its Utility Art Project. Thanks to Lowe’s s for donating 14 gallons of bonding primer,

18 gallons of paint, a pack of drop cloths, paint rollers and brushes, as well as volunteer time to prime 31 utility boxes.

- The City also began a program to show our appreciation to enlisted youth.
- We continue to develop more recreational activities for our youth. This year, Parks and Recreation received \$400,000 from the City, an increase of \$225,000 for the prior year. An additional \$35,000 was appropriated to replace the roof at Amy Covington and doors at Ward's.
- Hosted the first My Brother's Keeper Luncheon.
- Steve Azar's Golf Tournament continues to bring tons of celebrities and tourists to Greenville.
- The City established Public-Private-Parochial School Roundtable to strengthen the relationship among all our schools and the City of Greenville, while also working with organizations, economic development agencies, and educational institutions to promote policies that will spur innovation and support our students, parents, and teachers.
 - From the work of the Roundtable, the 2nd grade extravaganza-lunch and learn tours with 2nd graders that receive a crash course of Government 101.
- Sent our MYC to Starkville in February to attend youth summit at MSU.
- MYC went to the coast as well to attend the MML Summer meeting. MYC encouraged runners in the MS River Marathon.
- MYC helped Rotary Clubs with the Stop Hunger Now project.
- GPD raised \$2,000 for Cpl Couch, Clarksdale officer, and went to funerals of fallen police officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge.
- The Go Greenville Program continues to meet the purpose intended by Late Mayor Chuck Jordan. Thanks to the businesses that participated this year.
- Chief Brown went to funerals of fallen officers in Greenwood and Meridian.
- GFD completed a 9/11 stair climb in memory of New York firefighters.
- Launched a new customer service training program for all city employees "You Are Me and I am You" for our city employees to understand that you-our citizens-are our customers.
- The City hosted a group of Univ. TN-Knoxville students.
- Americorp students offered their services at the Welcome Boat, Fire Museum, and other city properties.
- The City hosted 2,000 8th graders and at-risk youth for Inaugural Pathways2Possibilities Career Expo.

- Gospel artist, Kirk Franklin, came and performed in Greenville. Thanks to Spencer Nash and Mashondia Redmond with Delta Foundation.
- Congressman's Thompson annual College and Career Day served thousands of high school students.
- The City had Employee Appreciation Events including an employee breakfast, Thanksgiving Dinner, and Holiday Party by partnering with ClearWater.
- The City held first Mayor's Youth Council Black History Celebration, a student run, student centered program that brought community together.
- For the first time, the City created and delivered Support Banners to all our schools letting them know that their government is here for them.
- Declared September-Child Cancer Awareness Month.
- Declared First Responders Day and partnered Pastor Steven Cantu with Grace Fellowship for the First Responders Day Program.
- The Blues Festival, the Mighty Mississippi Music Festival, and the Hot Tamale Festival brings thousands for tourists to our city.
- We declared the City of Greenville as a Hidden Hero City, a national campaign by Sen. Elizabeth Dole, Tom Hanks, and Tom Brokaw, recognizing military and veteran caregivers.
- Thanks to the Alice Bell Garden Club, the City of Greenville became the first city in the State to display the Gold Star for military families.
- The City held its first citywide Thanksgiving Dinner by partnering with Arbor Walk Health Care providing meals to thousands of folks.
- Christmas Parade was awesome with a record number of entries, the lighting of the tree, and the "Let It Snow" finality in Stein Mart Square. Thanks to Clearwater for its continued partnership in providing services and being a great city partner.

Capital Improvement Infrastructure Projects

The City has to align its priorities with its resources. 2016-2017 projects include

- Yazoo MS Valley Depot Restoration (\$450,000).
- MS River Levee Pedestrian Trail- Thanks to the City Council who appropriate \$156,000 to keep the project alive. We look walking and running on the trail this year.
- \$200,000 for annual street improvements.
- \$300,000 water/sewer capital improvements.
- \$175,000 FAA grant for beacon light, gate rehab, terminal drainage.

- \$15,000 Youth Court appropriation to assist with juvenile crime and reform juvenile justice. The first time the City budgeted money for youth court.
- The City of Greenville is moving into a State of the Art City with Wi-Fi across city Hall and 21st century technology in City Hall Chambers: a polycom system to enhance communications with the public and a projector and slide where citizens can follow along with City Council at council meetings. This creates transparency in city government. Also, we now have a Wi-Fi connection at Stein Mart Square and Shelben Park where citizens and visitors can connect to a Wi-Fi connection while downtown at our festivals, events, or just relaxing.

The State of our City is strong because of you. The strength of our city lies in our ability to work together to improve the quality and quantity of life for all.

For 2017, we will continue to move Greenville forward by improving our public infrastructure, create jobs and sustain existing jobs, continue with downtown revitalization and renovation, reduce crime, creating more recreation activities for our youth, creating a healthier city population, and continue our lead in tourism and hospitality.

It's all our residents who are helping to improve the city we all love.

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.

And I look forward to another productive year.

Thank You.

Text of the City of Greenville's State of the City Address delivered by Mayor Errick D. Simmons on Thursday, January 12, 2017 at Greenville High School's Auditorium.