

Building A Foundation

Annual Report | Mayor Jim Strickland | 2016



Dec. 22, 2016

Friends,

As my first year as your mayor draws to a close, I want to share what we've been doing. In a year so often characterized by the unexpected, our administration has accomplished quite a bit. I say that not about myself, but to brag on the meaningful work that the 6,400-plus employees of the City of Memphis conduct every single day. In a year that saw us recommit to the basics of core city services, our team rose to the challenge – in a big way.

Someone recently asked me how I would sum up this year. I thought for a moment and responded that it was a year of foundation-building. A foundation to reduce crime, to increase what we do for young people, and to set our city on a course for even more momentum. Yet as that foundation has been set, we've seen some real accomplishments – we're paving more streets, we're answering 911 calls much faster, we passed a budget *in seven minutes*, we convinced ServiceMaster to move Downtown, we worked with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital to greatly expand in Memphis, and we launched our first comprehensive plan since 1981.

Yet Memphis' long-known challenges – such as crime and poverty – remain. No one year will wipe them out completely. And as you well know, we had some struggles in 2016 – most notably setting a shameful record for the number of homicides in one year. We don't shy away from that; we tackle it head-on.

And make no mistake: We're going to push even harder in 2017.

But as 2016 ends, we wanted to create this annual report to you – our taxpayer, our citizen, our customer. It's taken the form of an in-depth listing of individual action items that form the foundation of a city government we're building for you – which we could not do without the meaningful partnership we have with the City Council. In this document, we hope you'll learn something about what we're doing throughout our city. And, as always, you can reach out to me at mayor@memphistn.gov.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Jim' or similar, written in a cursive style.

KEEPING MEMPHIS SAFE

No job of city government is more important than providing for the safety of our citizens, and I campaigned for mayor on the pledge to do all we can to reduce violent crime. As a result, action on public safety has dominated my first year as mayor. I've grouped our actions into three categories:

Prioritized recruiting and retaining employees:

- Allocated Memphis Police officers their first pay increase in years.
- Restored pre-65 retiree subsidized health insurance, the removal of which in 2014 was often cited as a reason for increased officer attrition.
- Launched campaign to increase officer recruitment, which yielded some 2,000 applications. (A typical year yields 500 applications.) A class with a goal of at least 100 recruits is planned to begin in March.
- Hired first class of Police Service Technicians in years and launched the Blue Path program through Southwest Tennessee Community College to establish a pipeline for PSTs, who can later become officers.
- Increased tuition benefits for officers and created a Police Officer III rank to better compensate veteran patrol officers. Officer attrition appears to have slowed when compared to 2014 and 2015 levels.
- Accelerated promotions within the department, promoting many more officers (237) than in recent years.
- Hired and trained 24 police recruits who graduated in August. Another class of 31 recruits started in September and is scheduled to graduate in February.

Fought violent crime and improved our police force:

- Hired proven, veteran leader Michael Rallings as police director.
- Increased our use of data-driven policing.
- Partnered with wide-ranging Operation Safe Community: III plan to coordinate crime-fighting efforts among other agencies.
- Awarded \$88,195 to 36 neighborhood groups as part of the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Grant program.
- Worked with the City Council to secure major funding for 70 new cameras to be distributed city-wide.
- Successfully sought new state laws to combat domestic violence.
- Strengthened our partnership with the Multi-Agency Gang Unit.

- Conducted an Organized Crime Unit operation in May that resulted in 394 felony arrests and 130 guns taken off the streets.
- Re-assigned police officers who formerly staffed schools to community centers.
- Partnered in the creation of the Beale Street Bucks program and partnered with the Shelby County Sheriff's Office to secure Beale on crowded nights.

Strengthened Memphis Fire and EMS response:

- Partnered with IBM research to address EMS misuse and commissioned a steering committee to implement recommendations.
- Allocated Memphis Fire personnel their first pay increases in years.
- Built a long-term career path to Memphis Fire through a curriculum in Shelby County Schools.
- Hired and trained 55 firefighter recruits who graduated in July. Another class of 53 recruits started in October and is scheduled to graduate in January.
- Implemented retention initiatives that allow former employees to return and current employees to obtain professional certifications. That saved over \$500,000 in MFD's budget.

DELIVERING GOOD GOVERNMENT

Striving to be "brilliant at the basics" is the very core of our mission. Beyond simply public safety, that means making smart decisions and delivering reliable, responsible services. The more of that we can do, the more Memphis can grow.

- Addressed staffing and process issues at our 911 call center, and answer times have been reduced by 75 percent since December 2015.
- Instituted data-driven performance measures, with mandatory monthly meetings to review what the data tells us about how we're performing -- and publicizing the data so taxpayers see how we're delivering services.
- Publicized and took ownership of a mistake that resulted in a backlog of garbage cart replacement requests.
- Utilized technology to improve Public Works and Engineering operations, thanks to Information Services' construction of a GIS-based solution for real-time management of service requests.
- Hired Alexis Pugh as director of Memphis Animal Services. She implemented key changes at MAS geared to increasing the live release rate for animals. By November, MAS' live release rate was 84 percent, up from 18 percent a few years ago.

- Budgeted \$16.5 million for street paving this fiscal year, a 10 percent improvement from last year that equates to 230 lane-miles.
- Increased the annual contribution to our pension fund, both to better its health and to comply with a state law that calls for funding 100 percent of the actuarial required contribution by 2020. The state Comptroller sent us a letter this summer lauding our financial position, and the rating agencies improved our outlook.
- Eliminated positions that were not essential to the core missions of city government, creating \$1 million in savings.
- Kept our tax rate level and did not dip into our reserve fund in our 2016-17 budgets.
- Worked closely with HUD and partners to ensure residents would find new homes when issues with a landlord forced hundreds of families out of the Tulane and Warren apartment complexes. Memphis successfully gained approval from HUD to keep site-based vouchers that can be used at other locations so that the ability to provide affordable housing opportunities remains.
- Implemented an improved garbage pickup service delivery model, working with labor partner AFSCME Local 1733, that has resulted in significantly fewer missed pickups in the areas in which it has been implemented.
- Appropriated an additional \$7.5 million to MATA in this year's budgets and authorized the transit agency to implement a new transit plan for its bus service.
- Constructed, in a matter of weeks, an expanded turn lane in response to heavy rush-hour traffic on Walnut Grove Road. A new turn signal, the first of its kind in Memphis, was installed allowing a left turn off Union onto McLean.

IMPROVING OUR ECONOMY

Providing good jobs – and making sure citizens can get those jobs – is critical to everything else we do. That's why I've taken a hands-on approach to attracting jobs and have made increasing the city's performance with minority and women-owned businesses a major priority. After all, for the economy to work, it must work for all.

- Raised \$55,000 in private donations to pay for expungements so non-violent felons can get back into the workforce. Forty-two citizens had their records expunged in the first two rounds of the Better Memphis program, which also includes job training.
- Assembled a team dedicated to retaining ServiceMaster's corporate headquarters and 1,200 jobs. In June, ServiceMaster announced its intention to move Downtown.

- Worked with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital to provide infrastructure funding that helps to ensure its expansion will take place in Memphis.
- Offered an out-of-the-box way to finance a crucial piece of equipment that helped prompt a partnership between Cargill and Calysta – and some 75 new jobs – to choose Memphis.
- Consolidated two offices that dealt with minority business contracting and hired a new director – Joann Massey – to spearhead our initiatives there. We made MWBE contracting a priority for division directors in budgeting, actively sought to improve our own accounts payable processes, and launched a variety of initiatives aimed at increasing the city's MWBE spend. By late 2016, the city was spending 15.9 percent of contract money with MWBE firms, up from 12.6 percent last December.
- Conducted job fairs with Radial and IKEA, and received a state grant to implement job skills training for incarcerated individuals to prepare them for release. More Memphians are employed in late 2016 than at any time in the past nine years.

INTERVENING IN YOUNG LIVES

City government must do everything it can – and must encourage others in the city to join – to intervene of the lives of young people so that they choose the right path and not the wrong path.

- Provided summer jobs and meaningful opportunities for 1,440 young people through our MPLOY and MAP programs.
- Partnered with the White House to unlock federal resources to improve future youth programming.
- Asked Literacy Mid-South to hold a pilot program in seven community centers in an effort to reduce the learning dropoff that comes with summer vacation.
- Held various hands-on programs to educate young people about life skills – such as the Empowerment Conference, where some 280 young people learned life skills such as financial literacy and how to manage social media, or the Professional Development Series, which taught skills to prepare young people for the workforce.
- Expanded our annual college fair in conjunction with the Southern Heritage Classic – more than 2,800 high schoolers attended.
- Increased youth participation in our libraries – 8,000 teens attended over 1,300 programs at the Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library in 2016, compared to 5,400 teens attending 370 programs the year prior.
- Launched the Memphis Youth City Council, where 13 high schoolers from across the city learned about government and proposed legislation.

CLEANING UP OUR CITY

No matter your address, you deserve to have a clean neighborhood free of blighted and neglected properties. Addressing blight encourages core-city development.

- Struck a deal between the owner of a blighted hotel near the Interstate 55 bridge and the residents of the French Fort neighborhood to have the hotel demolished. The hotel had been a vacant eyesore for more than 20 years.
- Demolished a highly visible apartment complex near the airport that had been vacant for about a decade. It's one of 23 blighted building demolitions performed by Public Works in 2016.
- Launched a targeted down payment assistance program that is intended to spur home purchases in certain core-city neighborhoods.
- Successfully sought a bill from the General Assembly that strengthens the Neighborhood Preservation Act, an important tool in the city's fight against blight.
- Joined the Memphis Blight Elimination Charter, a multi-agency, multi-organization plan to align efforts.
- Purchased a road rake to greatly increasing our capacity to clean up litter.
- Launched an Adopt-A-Park campaign in the spring that led to community groups taking charge of cleaning parks.
- Prioritized cutting city-owned grass, such as in road medians.

GAINING YOUR TRUST

It does us no good to work on delivering strong city services if citizens don't trust that we're hard at work for them. So we greatly increased our efforts at transparency and communication, and we followed through with initiatives to build more trust within our police department.

- Initiated a partnership with the Department of Justice's COPS program to evaluate community policing and use of deadly force.
- Implemented a responsible, thorough system for body and in-car cameras, and MPD is close to fully launching them.
- Launched popular weekly email updates to frankly discuss the city's challenges and shed light on the operations of city government.
- Increased our presence on social media, including launching a new city presence on Nextdoor,

allowing for messages to be targeted to individual neighborhoods.

- Took first steps in improving digital presence, including a short-term redesign of the city website's home page and the early process of building a completely new city website.
- Worked to actively build stronger relationships with federal and state officials and legislators, as well as seeking a more collaborative relationship with members of the City Council. The efforts paid off both in March, with the effective defeat of harmful de-annexation legislation, and in June, when the 2016-17 budgets passed unanimously in just seven minutes.
- Participated in more than two dozen community meetings. That includes meeting with protesters the day after the July bridge protest and on subsequent occasions.

BUILDING OUR FUTURE

It's important to be about more than just core services. That's why I'm just as passionate about building our future, one that's prosperous and equitable.

- Initiated Memphis 3.0, the two-year process by which we'll develop the city's first comprehensive plan in 35 years. The plan actively seeks to listen to neighborhoods about what they want in their future, and the plan, once adopted, will serve as a guide for future city investments.
- Landed a \$5 million grant from the Kresge Foundation to reimagine our riverfront.
- Initiated a process on Overton Park Greensward parking that led to a solution that both accommodates the Zoo's needs and forever ends parking on the Greensward – after some 30 years of dispute on the issue.
- Broke ground on a new housing development near Mason Temple in conjunction with the Church of God in Christ.
- Explored right-sizing our city through potential de-annexations in partnership with the City Council and Shelby County government.
- Initiated the process of redeveloping the Pinch District in conjunction with St. Jude's massive expansion.
- Began the next phase of improvements to the Cook Convention Center, which will help modernize the facility without using property tax dollars.
- Sought an expansion of the Downtown Tourism Development Zone that could lead to a significant funding source for the next iteration of Mud Island.
- Began early work on the South City development, which will replace the former Foote Homes housing complex and help remake the southeast end of Downtown.

