



MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
"STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE"
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2006
RACHEL D. MURRAH CIVIC CENTER

[PowerPoint slide show of past year photos to the song "Heaven is a Place on Earth" by Belinda Carlisle]

As the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, and although it was just a small package of images, what you just saw clearly shows why Winter Park is our "heaven" on earth especially as we work together and strive for excellence. Today I will speak about the various elements that make up Winter Park's slice of "heaven."

But before I officially begin, I would like to continue a State of the City tradition that officially marks the start of this annual address, the playing of Winter Park's official fanfare.

[Trumpeters play]

Since this fanfare was composed exclusively for this event, I would like to thank Dr. John Sinclair and the trumpeters of Rollins College Department of Music for helping us continue this annual tradition.

Many of you have spent recent evenings with my fellow commissioners and me discussing various issues facing the city, ranging from the city's comprehensive plan, to commuter rail, to the development in Winter Park. These issues will continue to be a source of discussion in the upcoming months.

This afternoon, however, I would like to focus our attention on this past year and the many accomplishments your hardworking city management and staff has achieved making our city the place we are fortunate to call home.

As we reflect on the past year, and think of all the reasons of why we chose Winter Park as the place to raise our families, the place to drive everyday to work, and the place to relax and enjoy our lives, it is very clear. We can certainly attribute this sense of comfort and pride to all the qualities that make us unique – our cultural amenities, our attractive environmental features, our unique leisure opportunities, and our strong base of involved citizens...these are all things that contribute to our high quality of life. But behind the scenes, we also have an excellent core of city management and staff that make all of these things possible and keep our special qualities maintained.

I don't think there is anyone in this room who would contest that we have one of the best [police and fire departments](#) in the nation.

As recognized by international and national organizations, our response times are some of the best in Florida, if not the country. Our Fire-Rescue Department has recently renewed its [international accredited status](#). More than 180 benchmarks were met by our firefighters which made the department the first agency in the county and now the only agency in Central Florida to achieve this prestigious status.

The Fire-Rescue Department is not alone in receiving recognition. The [Police Department](#) has received many awards this year, the most recent one being the IACP Technology Award recognizing the department's creative use of technology for traffic safety. The Police Department is the only department in the country to ever receive this award twice. They also developed a rapid deployment concept to provide aid to areas devastated by natural disasters. Our plan has been featured and adopted state wide for all police departments to follow. This month the Police Department will, for the third time, be reaccredited as a fully accredited law enforcement agency meeting 286 professional standards. We are one of only three municipalities in the area to be accredited. And when we talk about crime in Winter Park, we were the only municipality in Orange County that had a reduction in their crime rate, a reflection of what we already know that Winter Park remains a safe community.

These two departments are not only award winners, but they also have implemented initiatives that have saved Winter Park thousands of dollars and possibly the lives of our very own paramedic firefighters and patients. Many patients never realized that the paramedics place themselves at risk by not being able to properly wear seatbelts during treatment. The Fire-Rescue Department recognized this safety hazard and after a long two-year research period, they worked side by side with ambulance manufacturers and engineers to successfully redesign the patient care area allowing for our paramedics to be safely restrained while en route to the hospital. Because of Winter Park's innovative thinking, other ambulance manufacturers and even the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health are looking to make this new safer design the standard for ambulances nationwide.

When the fire department declared one of their ambulances surplus, the police department saw an opportunity for efficiency while filling a need to enhance their services to the community. I was amazed when I learned that the police department used money seized from drug dealers and labor from state prisoners to convert this surplus fire ambulance into a [new Hostage Negotiation/Mobile Command/Emergency Vehicle](#). We were able to save \$150,000 of taxpayers dollars by using the "bad guys" to actually do something good for our community.

This year was also significant because June marked the official one-year birthday of the city taking ownership of the [electric distribution system](#). I have to say, this first year was not the easiest year of transition, yet this year of learning has made us a stronger and more reliable system. We knew the system was in poor condition and once we took it over, we learned exactly what we inherited and have been making improvements to the system since day one.

The side effects of hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, coupled with the rising cost of fuel did not help our first year of ownership, but were beyond our control. I know we have seen higher electric bills, however, I would like to reiterate, [our rates continue to mirror those charged by Progress Energy](#), so these higher bills are not a result of us taking the system over. Having said that, I would like to report that since ownership, we have made significant improvements to the system that will help our reliability overall.

[SAIDI \(say-dee\)](#), which is considered as the best overall measure of reliability, measures the average customer outage time. Our SAIDI rating shows that Winter Park has improved and we will continue to improve over time as more money is reinvested back into the system.

We have also seen [decrease in the number of momentary outages](#) as a result of our focused tree-trimming efforts and vine removals. Since June 2005 we have trimmed over 6,500 trees and cut over 1,200 vines to reduce the number of momentary outages. So those of you who live in the Via's, don't lose hope yet.

Additionally, the reliability programs we have accomplished in our first year include completing a [pole inspection program](#), installing [new underground circuits](#) and approximately 30,000 feet of [underground wire](#), performing [infrared scans](#), [upgrading the control system](#), and making [upgrades to our telephone system](#). We are also in the process of adding an [automated outage reporting system](#) that allows customers to report their outages and check on restoration status by using a touch-tone phone.

Just this month, we instituted a new [surge protection](#) program that helps them keep our customers' electronics safe from lightning surges and a new [Home Wire](#) program that offers assistance for home electrical problems. So you can see we have made great strides in bringing the system up to Winter Park standards and continue to do so every day.

Moving on to another example of how our city strives for excellence, I'd like to talk about the state-of-the-art improvements made to our city's [water system](#). In March 2005 the city replaced its oldest water treatment plant, with the new Swoope Water Treatment Plant, an award-winning ozone treatment facility. Before this ozone treatment was in place, the city would treat its water by adding chlorine and using an aeration system that only took 50 to 60 percent of the naturally occurring hydrogen sulfide, which is that "rotten-egg" smell and taste, out of the water. Now our city water is treated with ozone that removes 100 percent of the hydrogen sulfide, therefore producing "bottled-quality" water for our customers. The Magnolia Water Plant is substantially completed and the Aloma Water Plant is scheduled to be completed by the first of the year where more of our water customers can use and drink this new and improved better tasting water.

Our residents not only gain the benefit of consuming excellent quality water, but they also have the unique opportunity to play in the spray. In March of this year, the city celebrated the grand opening of the newly built [Hannibal Square Spray Ground](#) in Shady Park.

About 3,500 gallons of water is housed in an underground vault and over 1,000 gallons of water is launched into the air for those to play in the spray. Because of successful partnerships with Orange County and funding from two grants and the CRA, this new, fun water feature is here for us to enjoy.

Just across the street from the Spray Ground, you will see the tremendous progress made on the [Hannibal Square Heritage Center](#), a very important cultural facility in our city. The Center, jointly managed by the Crealdé School of Art and the Winter Park Community Center, will serve as a permanent tribute to the past, present, and future contributions of Winter Park's African-American community. It will also offer family history services and house the "Heritage Collection." I, as well as the rest of the community, am looking forward to the grand opening of this project early next year.

Another example of the city striving for excellence is the success of our [Community Land Trust](#). At the end of last year, our first of 10 families closed on their new, affordably priced home on Israel Simpson Court. This month they all will be celebrating their second Thanksgiving dinner in their new Winter Park homes. With the prices of real estate sky high, the city is continuing its efforts to find land and other opportunities to expand its affordable housing initiative allowing more residents to consider Winter Park as a place to live.

Two Public Works projects I'd like to highlight this afternoon are the completion of the [New England and New York intersection](#) project and [Phase III of the Pennsylvania Avenue](#) streetscape project. As a city we are continually looking for ways to enhance our neighborhoods and streets that create a more welcoming environment. Amenities such as wider sidewalks, decorative stop-sign poles, brick pavers, additional oak trees, and new greenery, now adorn Pennsylvania Avenue. Ornamental streetlights also replaced all overhead wires as part of this project. City crews completed the final phase of the New England Avenue enhancement project in record time, with all the work done in-house saving almost \$150,000 of taxpayer money. Our Public Works Department continues to maintain its goal of [paving 10 miles](#) of asphalt each year and is developing improvement plans for South Lakemont, Temple Drive, and Palmer Avenue.

Not only is enhancement of infrastructure the key to the city's success, but so is preparation and education. Unlike other cities in the country, Winter Park is being extremely proactive in preparing itself and its residents for any type of local emergency, including the Avian Flu. Just last month, the city hosted two [Emergency Preparedness Informational meetings](#) that focused on the potential threat of the Avian Flu and the impact it may have on our community. The city is doing its part in helping our residents be prepared and educated to avoid the chaos and panic that accompanies emergencies. I encourage all of you to visit our Web site to see how you too can prepare.

Communication is vital not only during emergencies but even more so, in everyday life. During my campaign I stressed the importance of listening and gathering citizen input.

This year, to support that mission, our award-winning Communications Department started a program called [CoffeeTalk](#) that was held once a month at the Winter Park Country Club. We were told that the commission meetings and public assemblies were too intimidating for some residents, so CoffeeTalk was created to allow for a more comfortable environment for anyone to share their comments or ask questions of the commission. We have heard only positive comments about this new program and I enjoyed the opportunity to communicate with Winter Park citizens in this casual setting. I look forward to speaking with more of you at CoffeeTalks next year.

In April of this year, our treasured Central Park celebrated its [Centennial Anniversary](#) that commemorated the parks past 100 years. Throughout the month of April, the Parks & Recreation Department hosted a variety of events that honored Central Park in which hundreds of residents came out to support. In fact, today is a very special day for Central Park because it marks the official first day of the “[Art on the Green](#)” exhibition. If you haven’t had a chance to meander through the park, you will have the opportunity between today and February 19, 2007, to see the works of internationally renowned sculptors for the exhibition including Vito Acconci (a-con-chi), Red Grooms, Robert Lobe, Louise Nevelson, Tom Otterness, and Brian Tolle (toll). On Saturday, I invite you to join us for the opening celebration from noon – 4 p.m. to experience and discover this world class museum without walls.

Our city would not be the City of Culture and Heritage without the many institutions and civic organizations that make up the very essence of our community. According to several national rankings, many of Winter Park’s cultural, retail, and recreational establishments have been ranked at the top of the “best of” lists.

Of these are [Rollins College](#), the #1 College in Southeast, the [Winter Park Public Library](#) being #1 in Florida, and [Fleet Peoples Park](#) as the #8 best dog park in the country. In addition, we also have the Metropolitan Museum in New York featuring our very own [Morse Museum’s](#) exclusive Tiffany collection, the [Cornell Fine Arts Museum](#) that just re-opened early this year, [the Albin Polasek](#) Museum that showcases classical sculptures and mythological pieces, and the Winter Park [Historical Museum](#) located in the #1 ranked Farmers’ Market.

So as visitors come to our city to enjoy these cultural amenities, by the summer of next year, they will have a new Welcome Center that will serve as the official first-stop hospitality site greeting Winter Park visitors and guests, as well as the new home of the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce. I am looking forward to the grand opening of this [Welcome Center](#) scheduled for the summer of next year.

These cultural amenities coupled with the services provided by our outstanding city management and staff, is what makes Winter Park our “heaven” on earth. I’m sure all of you in this room know that our wonderful city is going through some growing pains. Before I conclude, I would like to touch on the status of our [Comprehensive Plan](#) that is currently being reviewed to help us address this growth.

Although this review has been extremely tense, emotional and heated at times, what we are experiencing now is healthy debate and we will emerge stronger and more united.

For over a year now, our dedicated city staff and citizen volunteers have been working on revisions to the comp plan and we still have more to do. On Monday, October 23, we voted to transmit the comp plan to Tallahassee for state review which will come back to us early next year. We hope for final adoption in spring. This document will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and I appreciate all the citizen feedback and involvement it has received.

I can't tell you how humbled I am that you have put your confidence in me to lead this city in a positive direction and I look forward to working with all of you in the upcoming years. Thank you.

END