



**MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
"MOVING FORWARD"
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2007
RACHEL D. MURRAH CIVIC CENTER**

As those pictures clearly displayed, regardless of the weather, every day is like "Walking on Sunshine" in Winter Park and as we move forward this year, I am always happy to say that today and every day is just another day in paradise.

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.

This past year has been quite an eventful year where the city has moved forward on major issues such as the post office property, the comprehensive plan, and commuter rail.

In June, the City Commission approved the terms of the settlement agreement with Central Park Station Partners. This gave the city the rights to purchase the post office property. The city has fulfilled its financial commitment to the developer and now awaits the decision of the post office on whether or not the distribution and retail operations of the post office site can be split. I personally would like to keep the retail function of the post office in downtown, so we have presented some options for the post office to consider and will move forward upon hearing back from them.

In the mean time, I am continuing my HOPE fundraising efforts to Help Our Park Expand, for which to date we have received approximately \$2 million in contributions and pledges. If you are eager to continue the philanthropy of Charles Hosmer Morse, who made the original gift of Central Park to the city in 1906, and expand Central Park, you can contribute to HOPE via the city's web site cityofwinterpark.org.

I am happy to say we have moved forward with the Comprehensive Plan which was adopted on August 27 and submitted on September 15 to the Department of Community Affairs in Tallahassee. We have the ability to revise this document twice a year. The Comprehensive Plan is a working document that will continue to be looked at and tweaked in the years to come.

In May this year, the approval of the interlocal agreement with Orange County and 53 percent vote in favor of a stop in Winter Park has allowed us to move forward on commuter rail. We are awaiting a 30% platform design of the stop from FDOT which is expected to be presented to the City Commission in December.

So as you can see, we have definitely moved forward on the big ticket items that were hot topics from last year and continue to be major issues for us this year. Now I would like to highlight many of the new innovative programs and initiatives your dedicated city management and staff have provided to improve Winter Park's quality of life, safety and comfort.

Now well into our third year owning the electric utility system, we continue to make major strides as we move forward in improving the electric reliability. In June, the City Commission approved the first phase of the city's long-term plan to underground the city-owned power lines, where practical, which can take up to 30 plus years. The city has identified its first seven main line feeder projects, the first of which will begin in January. It has also created a neighborhood cost-sharing program called PLUG IN (Putting Lines Under Ground In Neighborhoods) for neighborhoods that are interested in accelerating the undergrounding of their neighborhood lines. So far, approximately 14 neighborhoods have expressed interest in the PLUG IN program with six of the 14 ready for cost estimates.

The electric utility has also created a new program, the Emergency Utility Assistance program in partnership with United Way 2-1-1 that gives customers the chance to help neighbors in financial emergency need by contributing to this program. Also this year, the Electric Utility has provided its customers with an Online Energy Audit that help electric utility customers conserve electricity and learn how to manage their home energy use. As we all strive to become more energy efficient, this new program helps customers save energy by the simple click of a mouse.

Technology this year, not only afforded us the ability to conserve energy, but it also has allowed for the development of OUTREACH, the city's new interactive community emergency alert system and WI-FI, the city's new outdoor Internet.

Earlier this year, central Florida experienced yet another form of natural disasters – tornadoes. Lives we're lost as residents did not have any real notice of the impending danger. The City Commission realized this vulnerability and approved the funding for OUTREACH. The Fire-Rescue Department has continued to expand its role as the city's emergency manager and brought OUTREACH to the city coupling today's technology with the tried and true method of outdoor warning sirens. Emergency managers will now have the tools they need to make sure our residents have the best opportunity to survive any local emergency.

In addition, key city staff members participated in a structured table top training exercise, led by the Fire Department, to help sharpen those skills needed in emergency management. Both the technology and outdoor sirens components of OUTREACH are scheduled for full implementation by the end of this year.

Through a partnership with Bright House Networks, technology has also brought the internet outdoors for our residents and guests as they travel throughout the city. If you have a Wi-Fi enabled computer or phone, and frequent Park Avenue, Lake Island Park, Central Park, the Winter Park Community Center or other popular areas within the Central Business District, you can access the Internet while outside. This system not only allows guests to stay connected, but it also allows our police and fire personnel to stay connected as they patrol our streets.

Speaking of patrolling the streets, you may have seen this sporty new stealth mustang cruising through Winter Park recently and today is parked right outside. But aggressive drivers beware, it's not just a pretty face, it actually is the police department's first unmarked vehicle that is equipped with its own police officer, lights and \$12,000 worth of traffic-monitoring technology. In recognition of the Police Department's successful traffic safety programs, the Winter Park Police Department was the lucky winner of this brand new \$30,000 red Mustang coupe at the annual Law Enforcement Challenge. This year, and for the past seven years, the Police Department has placed in the top two positions of their category. This new vehicle will help ensure both vehicular and pedestrian safety on our roads. Now, every red mustang is not a police car, so I would recommend safe driving at all times, not just when you see a red mustang in your review mirror.

Police and Fire do a fantastic job of keeping our city safe. With the amount of cars traveling through Winter Park, it's the Public Works Department that continues to take measures to keep our roads maintained and our pedestrians safe. Public Works has kept its goal of paving 9 to 10 miles of asphalt roads this past year with the completion of South Lakemont Avenue, sections of Kennilworth shores, and the Via's. Palmer is underway to be paved followed by Temple Drive, Timberlane Shores, more in Kennilworth Shores, and South Winter Park Road neighborhoods.

As we keep our roads safe, pedestrians also are top of mind. This year we held a meeting to update the city's Bicycle & Pedestrian Circulation Plan, we replaced all 191 existing traditional signals with new countdown pedestrian signals, and we began the planning stages and construction for many streetscape projects that will also enhance the pedestrian experience.

If you've driven down Orange Avenue from 17-92 recently, you've seen the work our crews are doing to improve the intersection of Orange, Minnesota and Denning Drive. The City Commission approved funding for these improvements in May of which part is paid for through assessment of Orange Avenue property owners. The installation of brick and other amenities to the intersection was part of phase one and phase two will begin in 2008. Phase two includes the enhancements to Orange Avenue from Holt Avenue to 17-92 and the installation of decorative street lights, trash receptacles, landscaping, street benches, newspaper enclosures, pedestrian crosswalks and underground electric.

Fairbanks Avenue is also an important corridor into our city and is undergoing extensive study as well. From 17-92 to Lakemont Avenue, the Florida Department of Transportation and the city are looking at ways to improve the safety of the walking environment. Improvements may include enhanced sidewalks, brick pavers and decorative lights. A public meeting was held in September to look at initial concepts and attendees had the opportunity to provide input prior to the construction documents being prepared.

Just yesterday, another public meeting was held regarding Fairbanks Avenue from I-4 to U.S. Highway 17-92. The Water and Wastewater Department in partnership with CH2MHILL addressed the planned sewer system and roadway improvements to Fairbanks continuing along Wymore to north of Lee Road.

Improvements such as raised medians, pedestrian crossings, streetscape enhancements and sewer system installations are all components of this plan. These improvements will transform Fairbanks into a more walkable and aesthetically pleasing entrance to Winter Park.

Making improvements to enhance and revitalize areas of the city is a priority especially to our Planning and Community Development Department. In April, the department traveled to Philadelphia to accept the American Planning Association's 2007 National Planning Award for Innovation in Neighborhood Planning in honor of Jane Jacobs for the Revitalization of Hannibal Square. Many projects such as the construction of the new Hannibal Square Heritage Center, Railroad Avenue Residences project, Hannibal Square Community Land Trust, addition of the Hannibal Square Spray Ground, and revitalizing the area's brick streets, were all elements that helped the city receive this recognition. Because the APA award recognizes cutting-edge planning achievements that play a role in helping create communities of lasting value, it was a true honor to be the 2007 recipient of this national award.

Also under Planning and Community Development is our Community Redevelopment Agency. I'm proud to say that the CRA and its advisory board have worked diligently with residents and business owners to complete their strategic planning process and they have developed six goals for the coming years. These goals address a new or renovated community center, an overall streetscape plan, preservation of historical integrity, affordable housing, a youth resource center and the long-term financial viability of the CRA.

A few of these goals are supported by the establishment of the city's latest affordable housing project, the West Comstock Housing Development. Ground was broken on September 19 for this project which is a partnership between the CRA and the Hannibal Square Community Land Trust. This development includes four new single-family homes which are expected to be complete before the New Year. They are also green building certified. This new housing development will compliment the neighborhood and is sure to enhance the viability of the area.

Keeping our neighborhoods attractive and compliant is such an important goal of our Code Enforcement Department, that they created a new initiative this year called the Partnership with Code Enforcement Compliance Program. The purpose of this voluntary program is for the city to partner with, educate, and support residents to keep their neighborhoods attractive. It is easy to see how repeated violations such as overgrowth, parking in front yards or across sidewalks, or keeping trash containers out for an extended period of time, can deteriorate the quality of a neighborhood. This partnership lessens repeat offenses and enhances Winter Park's quality of living. So far, the College Quarter neighborhood has participated in this initiative and they have seen quite an improvement. Four other areas have expressed interest and are ready to participate.

Major improvements have also been made to the city's lake quality due to the constant investment in stormwater treatment. Our regular Winter Park Country Club golfers felt the impact of one of city's biggest stormwater projects of the year, as it was installed right under hole number 3 of the golf course.

Early this year, the city's Stormwater Utility, in partnership with the State of Florida, used a Florida Forever Matching Grant to finance a project that captures and treats the stormwater drainage for over 65 acres of land helping preserve the quality of Lake Maitland. A large underground exfiltration system was installed within the fairway of hole number three and just last month, the fairway re-opened and the third and fourth holes were restored back to their original par five status.

Because of projects like this and the city's committed investment in treating stormwater before it hits the lakes, the city's has seen an unprecedented improvement in its lake quality. Due to the city's continual maintenance, lake clarity now is nearly 10 feet for a majority of the year in the chain of lakes as compared to an average of 3 feet of clarity in the early 90s.

This year has also been a great year for ground breakings and dedications as we broke ground for the Howell Branch Preserve in September transforming this natural habitat into a passive recreation facility for Winter Park residents and visitors. We also dedicated the new fence at the Farmers' Market that celebrated the fundraising and planning efforts of the Keep Winter Park Beautiful volunteers and board.

I can't forget to mention the festive grand openings we celebrated this year especially the grand openings of the Hannibal Square Heritage Center in April and the grand opening of the new Winter Park Welcome Center and Chamber of Commerce Building in September.

With so many exciting and unique initiatives our city provides, it's hard to highlight all the wonderful things our city offers. I know I'm preaching to the choir when I boast about how unique and special Winter Park is. I, as many of you do, travel to many beautiful places in the world but regardless of where I go, I'm always thankful and happy to come back home.

Before I conclude, I would feel remiss to not mention the change in city management in this year's State of the City Address as this was a major decision that impacts our city in years to come.

Although I did not agree with the majority of the Commission on the decision to terminate our prior City Manager, I, as well as all of my fellow commissioners, am excited about and am confident in the abilities, skills and leadership of our new City Manager, Randy Knight. We will be looking for his guidance and extensive CPA financial background as we anticipate more state mandated tax reductions and more challenging budgetary years in the future.

Thank you for your continued support and I encourage all of you to stay active, informed and involved in the City of Winter Park as we continue "Moving Forward."

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