



# *The State of the City Address*

*As Delivered by:*

*The Honorable Mayor Tony F. Mack*

*Mayor of Trenton: New Jersey's Capital City*

*Trenton City Hall Council Chambers*

*Monday, March 21, 2011*

*Doors Open: 6:00PM*

*Program Begins: 6:30PM*



## *State of the City Address*

Good Evening and Welcome to the State of the City Address. Good Evening Council President, City Council members, elected officials, and distinguished guests. I stand before you with one mission: a better Trenton. A better Trenton cannot be realized without looking first at our past, then toward our future. Tonight is when we do both, together.

Looking to the past, we see that when I took office, a lot of things were wrong, a lot of things had to be cleaned up, and I'm going to tell you what we did to clean up that mess. But, much more important, I'm here to talk to you about the future, about my vision for the City of Trenton. It's a vision of a greener city, with world-class parks for our children. It's a vision of a safer city, with police officers walking the beat, focusing on preventing crimes before they happen. It's a vision of a more beautiful City with freshly paved, litter-free streets, and community gardens in every ward. And, most of all, it's a vision of a vibrant city, with an active street life, new private sector jobs and a strong growing economy.

First the past, when I took office on July 1, the administration faced a monumental \$55,000,000 million budget deficit. No single administration in our City's great history wrestled with a larger financial obstacle. I am proud to announce that last week we eliminated that budget deficit completely, and we were able to do this without cutting one service to residents of Trenton. When we entered office, the prior administration was kind enough to leave us with a layoff plan. If we had implemented the layoff plan designed by the prior administration, it would have reduced the City's workforce by 328 employees, 328 people would have lost their jobs including 111 police officers and 61 firefighters. This plan also included closing public pools, all libraries, and senior centers; the reduction of garbage collection to one day a week and the complete elimination of the entire Department of Recreation, Natural Resources, & Culture. The layoff plan also called for the downsizing of our Sanitation division by 25 employees and the loss of two street sweeper employees.



Had this layoff plan been executed I assure you we would be looking at a completely different Trenton. At the time, our administration determined maintaining the vital services to residents were our top priority. Reducing police, fire, and sanitation services was immediately taken off the table.

Instead, we encouraged the City's bargaining units to offer givebacks. We directed department directors to scrutinize every line item in their budgets for possible savings. We focused more on ascertaining funding, grant writing and on encouraging departments to put extra effort into researching and applying for these grants.

In short, our administration operated on the budget with a scalpel to address our deficit, instead of wildly swinging an ax with little thought to the consequences. The road to this point has not been an easy one, nor should it have been. It is not an easy task to reduce the number of employees or eliminate vacancies in a department while the public expectation of services goes unchanged. It is not an easy task to increase the workload of existing employees, while unable to offer increased wages or benefits. Some employees are performing the work equivalent of two to three employees. These employees, including those who were laid off, remain dedicated to public service. Our administration owes gratitude to all employees and the team of dedicated acting and recently appointed permanent department directors who went above and beyond the call of duty. Please join me in applauding them now for their continued service to the City of Trenton.

The operative ideal essential to our success during this economic climate is the ideal of *partnership*. *Partnership* requires everyone to be willing to give something up for the greater good. *Partnership* requires us to recognize that alone we cannot solve the issues our City faces. Common sense dictates we unite and combine resources. Again, the ideal of *partnership* will remain a pillar of my decision-making process.

The problem's we continue to face are multi-directional. Discussions that should have occurred around conference tables were waged on the pages of newspapers and blogs. Let's move away from these battles, and agree tonight that we can do better, and we will. We hosted town hall meetings throughout the summer, fall, and winter, and we will continue to do so to ensure open communication, transparency, and access to



information. We also host a monthly radio program on WIMG 1300AM, so that we can speak with one voice to the City.

Getting back to partnership, we partnered with community organizations and stakeholders to host a Youth Development Summit, an Art, Culture and Heritage Summit, and we will host an Economic Development Summit at the end of this month. As a result of these summits I signed two executive orders into law, creating a youth development task force and a domestic violence task force. We partnered with Rutgers University and borrowed one of the City of Newark's highly successful programs: the Youth Education Employment and Success Center at the Daylight/Twilight High School on Hanover Street.

In order to honor the achievements of our students, right now the atrium is transformed into a display room, showcasing works authored and illustrated by students from Washington Elementary School, Stokes Elementary School and Hedgepeth Williams Elementary School. City Hall will become its own *Orchestra Hall* on Friday evening where students from Foundation Academy Charter School Orchestra & Choir will perform "An Evening of Student Achievement." We also reopened our South Broad Street senior center. Soon we will have a state of the art tennis facility which already made national news. I am very proud of these major accomplishments for the City of Trenton.

That then is it for the past. Now I want to move forward on to my vision for Trenton.

First, a few concrete goals we plan to implement over the next year.

- We are considering special legislation, for the Capital City, requiring all non-civilian new hires to live and reside within the City of Trenton. We will partner with County, State, and Federal entities, to encourage their employees to live where they work. Through the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, it is our hope people will take advantage of the *live where you work low-interest mortgage* to rebuild and infuse our City with new residents.
- I will sign an Executive Order establishing the Capital City Educational Trust Commission. Institutions of higher learning in Camden, Newark, Paterson, Jersey City, and New Brunswick have transformed portions of these cities. We believe a



similar transformation can happen in Trenton. This Commission will begin serious discussions with public and private colleges/university to consider our proposals.

- Our administration will work with our educational partners to secure funding and reopen Trenton Central High School's Vocational Program. There are many successful men and women throughout the region who learned a trade at our Vocational Technical Program. This program will once again be a resource for our children. We should be opening doors for our children's success not shutting them, and when opened, VoTech will be regarded again as a transformative gateway.
- We will seek revenue sharing agreements with the County as it relates to the Sun Bank Center and Waterfront Park. Following in the footsteps of many other prosperous cities across the nation, we will pursue ways in which to receive a portion of proceeds from sales of tickets and parking for entertainment and sporting events. In the same line of reasoning, we will also work aggressively with the state to establish an equitable '*Host Benefit Fee Program*' so we can recoup the costs of wear and tear on our infrastructure directly resulting from use by government workers.
- Currently, our unemployment rate is twice that of the national average. The City of Trenton should be a place for second and third chances for those who want the opportunity to gainfully contribute to our community. We must be willing to open our hearts and minds and look beyond the past. I encourage leaders in our religious, business, civic, educational, and non-profit communities to continue to use your organizations as places that welcome statewide re-entry initiatives.

As I stand before you today, my heart is beating with excitement- excitement at the vision of a Trenton reborn. A greener, safer, more beautiful, vibrant and growing Trenton- Here's how I plan to make that vision a reality.



The Department of Recreation, Natural Resources, & Culture was slated to be eliminated, as mentioned earlier. Instead, we retained key staff and maintain department functions in order to preserve recreation programs, parks, and our cultural venues. Because of our decision, we are proud to say that four of our recreation centers remain open and a resource to our residents. We have signed off on park and cultural site renovations that exceed \$12,000,000 million which demonstrates our commitment to a greener and more active community.

On a very cold bitter December morning we broke ground on our new Tennis Center at Cadwalader Park. Once completed this facility will be the nation's largest junior tennis facility and we will have a full ceremony with individual and corporate donors and sponsors. We are grateful for our partners the National Junior Tennis & Learning of Trenton; the United States Tennis Association; Friends of Cadwalader Park Tennis; D&R Greenway; and private individuals. I will not stray from my commitment to these projects because these projects are Trenton's future. You cannot have a community without community space.

Some of those locations to be renovated include: Calhoun Street Field, George Page Park, Mill Hill Park, Greg Grant Park, Mill Hill Playhouse, The William Trent House, The Ike Williams Center, and Cadwalader Park. Let me share a little more detail:

Calhoun Street Park renovates the existing multi-purpose field into two separate fields designed for use as a soccer field and football field. Site improvements will also include the addition of turf irrigation, stadium style bleachers and field lighting. In addition, a small playground will be added near the existing pool and the parking area will be reconfigured and renovated. Landscaping improvements will be installed throughout the facility. Future improvements for the next phase will focus on the renovation of the pool house facility.

Greg Grant Park construction will create a new park on a former industrial site and will include the construction of a brand-new basketball court, large playground, amphitheatre/spray-pool, picnic grove and gazebo, as well as an extensive pathway



system with decorative lighting. The completed park will also provide extensive lawn areas and landscaping.

Cadwalader Park includes 3 dynamic projects.

1. Picnic pavilion, playground, and pedestrian bridge: this project will include the removal of the existing 1983 pavilion and installation of a beautiful new structure which closely replicates the original 1903 pavilion, destroyed by fire. The pavilion will include secured access to utilities provided to make the structure serve a broader range of functions. A ‘state of the art’ playground will be constructed nearby. The existing canal bridge is scheduled to be removed and a new structure, more closely resembling the original bridge, will be constructed at the original location.

2. As described above, the tennis courts project is structured into two phases, phase one will include the restoration of the existing asphalt courts including a new asphalt surface and color coating, new nets and post and new fencing. Phase two will include a new asphalt surface on the clay courts, with new nets, posts and fencing and will provide for ‘short courts’ used to teach the sport to children.

3. Ellarslie, the City of Trenton Museum will finally be lighted at night, showing off this historic jewel.

Mill Hill Park improvements: includes three projects

1. Renovations to the existing park include: new park entry plazas along the Broad and Front Street perimeters as well as the reconfiguration of the entry at Broad/Front Sts., a new pathway system within the park, interpretive signage, a renovated and stable historic iron bridge, a new bathroom within the basement of the Douglass House, replacement of the park lighting and extensive landscape improvements.



2. The Ike Williams Center (Clay St.) will receive extensive exterior and interior renovations including: the replacement of the existing garage door façade with a series of glass paneled doors and entry canopy, new exterior lighting, accessible entry and renovations to the adjacent courtyard. Interior renovations will include new flooring, lighting, mechanical systems, a kitchenette, bathroom renovations and new courtyard entry doors.
  
3. Mill Hill Playhouse will receive a new roof and exterior lighting.

George Page Park: phase one includes restoring the historic entry plaza on Clinton Ave. and expanding the existing playground. Subsequent phases include: the addition of landscape improvements, decorative lighting and a pathway system to tie into the adjacent Clinton Commerce and Crescent Wire sites. Future plans are also being developed for Hetzel Field that will include renovations to the ball-fields and pool-house and redesign of the pool complex to include a new pool and spray-ground. Parking, accessible pathways, pedestrian lighting and landscape improvements will be completed as well.

Trent House: We will clean and paint the Trent House, and light it at night, to show off yet another of Trenton's many historical sites.

Artworks: renovations to this facility include putting on a new insulated roof system, renovating to the exterior brick walls, new rain scuppers and downspouts and upgrades to the existing HVAC system to increase efficiency.

Cook Y Field : renovations to the existing turf field and provision of bleacher, goal posts and a portable irrigation system to maintain the field turf.

Roberto Clemente Park: renovations to the existing park include expanding the existing pool compound, building a new color-coated basketball court, ornamental fencing and



brick plazas at the two entrances, ornamental lighting and extensive landscaping as well as a new playground and a gazebo within the renovated children's garden to accommodate environmental classes and garden crafts.

In addition to all of that, I am happy to share; we will re-start the Parks Commission. The Parks Commission is a citizen's advisory committee that works with the City to ensure our parks are among the best in the world. It was deactivated during the previous administration. This administration is bringing it back to life, to allow our most important consumer; the park users, to have a say in how their parks are run. As you can see from all that I've mentioned, we are well on the way to my vision of a greener, more active Trenton.

You all know public safety is near and dear to my heart. Starting with the Trenton Police Department – it is constantly improving its police management model to meet the changing needs of our community. I have long thought that community policing, a strategy that has worked so well in other large cities, was the right strategy for Trenton. Community policing involves getting police officers out of their cars and into our neighborhoods, getting feet on the street. Tonight I am enthusiastic to share the start of community policing in Trenton. Starting this week, our police force will put in place the Neighborhood Enforcement and Stabilization Task Force (NEST) initiative.

The NEST program was created to merge police enforcement and community policing practices, to open the lines of communication and adopt a neighborhood team approach to crime and safety issues. In addition to NEST, we are putting in place an Intelligence-Led Policing initiative (ILP). ILP makes sure that all the information the officers on the beat collect from their neighborhoods filters up the command structure. That way our commanders can make decisions based on the best kind of intelligence, intelligence learned on the street, from the community. This year we will thus make a dramatic change, a change from solving crime, which is important, to joining together with the community to prevent crime. We saw how effective this was, city-wide, during this summer's, *Take it to the Streets program*, and we heard you loud and clear at our *Public Safety Summit*.



We have already implemented the Comstat Model, which provides police with the computer data they need to track crime in real time. Comstat is based on four basic principles: accurate and daily intelligence, rapid deployment of resources, effectiveness of tactics, and relentless follow-ups and assessments. The aforementioned principles allowed the department to reduce the number of crimes committed in the City by tracking “hot spots,” high-crime areas, and assigning police officers based on real data. Further, as the year progresses, the department will pursue an expanded model for intelligence gathering, while continuing to expand its Criminal Intelligence Unit. Refining this data-led model will allow for the best possible deployment of resources.

Additionally, in a new collaborative effort between the Trenton Police Department and the Trenton Municipal Court, an initiative is being created to institute a Safe Surrender, Amnesty program that will assist residents and those with outstanding matters in the Trenton Municipal Court. Through this program the Trenton Municipal Court will assist these individuals in disposing of their matters by paying their fines, setting up payment plans, complying with court orders, scheduling new court hearings, and other types of relief.

With all these changes, with the introduction of community policing, feet on the street, with police decisions informed by real-time computer data, we are well on the way to fulfilling my vision of a safer Trenton.

I also want to see a more beautiful Trenton; we have received 10 grants funded by the New Jersey Department of Transportation totaling \$6 Million dollars. We’re using these grants to fund immediate improvements to Hanover Street and Cadwalader School. Additional projects include repairs to Stockton Street, Perry and Bank streets, North Warren Street, Montgomery Street, South Clinton Avenue, installing ADA Ramps in various locations, Bellevue Avenue, and Broad Street. Last summer roads were aggressively paved, this summer we will pave a record number of roads by doubling our roads crews. In fact, most of last summer’s roads were recommended by residents at our town hall meetings, and we were excited to make noticeable improvements to the City. Let me take a moment to thank our unsung heroes who keep our streets clean and



healthy. There is something to be said about every road, sanitation, waste and recycling worker. Please join me in applauding their dedicated service to our City.

Along with freshly-paved streets, we are also continuing a project dear to my heart: the Annual Clean Communities Litter March. This year's theme is, "*Its Simple Go Green...Keep Your City Clean.*" The City of Trenton will celebrate our clean communities and our natural resources. This year, local schools, community groups, civic associations, churches, private businesses, city residents, and public employees will participate in our Litter March on Monday, April 18 from 8:30am to 3:00pm in Mill Hill Park. I served as past chairman of the Litter March Committee for over 14 years. I am so excited to march with you to Keep Trenton Clean.

To further beautify our neighborhoods, we are happy to announce a new, comprehensive community gardens program. This program will utilize city-owned property to ensure we have community gardens throughout the City. We will put gardens first in every ward, and eventually in every neighborhood in the Trenton community. Community gardens not only beautify our neighborhoods, they serve as a place for neighbors to socialize and provide the people of Trenton with freshly-grown, locally produced food. I am proud to be the Mayor that introduced this long-overdue program.

With freshly-paved, litter-free streets, with community gardens brightening our neighborhoods, we are well on our way to achieving my vision of a more beautiful Trenton.

The engine that powers these improvements, of course, is economic growth. That's why it's so important for us to make the last part of my vision a reality. To make Trenton a vibrant, growing City.

We have a myriad of ways we are going to achieve that goal. The first is encouraging the use of the Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit Program. Trenton is only one a few cities allowed to use this program, which encourages development around our newly-renovated Train station and our light-rail stations. I am pleased that we already have a project underway, a \$250 million office tower next to the train station that will be built as part of this tax-credit program.



But development cannot happen unless people have decent places to live, unless we can revitalize our housing stock. One way we are doing this is through the \$100 million HOPE VI redevelopment project. As a result of our continued partnership with the Trenton Housing Authority 600 Trenton residents attended the HOPE VI job fair. Projects like this will continue to serve and attract commuters to the sixth busiest train station along the Northeast corridor.

On the housing front in 2010, the City has been working diligently to renovate abandoned homes and make Trenton's housing what it should be. For example, in the last few months we have rehabilitated 14 homes on Dunham Street, started construction on 18 homes for working families on Carteret Avenue, finished construction on 34 homes on Lamberton and Lalor Streets and continued the rehabilitation of 78 homes in the East Ward. Additionally, we commenced construction of 20 units on East State Street during the early part of the year and new working families are expected to move in by April 2011.

We are also increasing revenue generation and helping revitalize the City by selling abandoned homes. We sold a total of 58 properties in our last auction. The total proceeds from this auction netted \$383,400. Other sales include: the sale of 657-659 Calhoun Street to Cleantex for their business expansion, netting \$50,000 and potentially creating 150 jobs; the sale of two acres of the Kramer Site to Faigle Realty, netting \$150,000 and creating an industrial facility for Standard and Roofing, a Trenton business which is projected to create additional jobs once the new facility is up.

On the economic development front in 2010, City staff continued to expand outreach to local businesses to join the Urban Enterprise Zone Program (UEZ), using the 'door-to-door' campaign to explain the cost savings and grant benefits of membership. Additionally, the City continues to support redevelopment and revitalization through its Award-winning Brownfields Program. The Brownfields Program utilizes State and Federal resources to conduct environmental cleanup for important revitalization projects such as the Assunpink Greenway, the rehabilitation of the former Magic Marker site and East Trenton Homes, to name only a few.



In October, the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Trenton Small Business Week was very successful. We have also re-established important links to the Trenton Downtown Association, and are committed to the integrated approach espoused by the Downtown Capital District Master Plan. On March 31<sup>st</sup> we will hold an Economic Development Summit, which will focus on implementing the Downtown Master Plan. Additionally, an RFP has been issued to develop the Glen Cairn Site. In spite of the challenging economy, other economic development highlights include: Delicatessen on South Warren Street and a new restaurant, 'Eleven' on Front Street.

That's not all, projects in the pipeline include: NJBIA's new headquarters on Lafayette Street; the proposed redevelopment of Building 101(Roebling Complex); a new housing development by the Rescue Mission; new housing development by HomeFront; Phase II of the Delaware run project by K. Hovnanian Homes; the creation of a loan pool with funding partners to facilitate residential development in the city; the redevelopment of the Polizzi meat market site; and the redevelopment of the former Mill Hill Hotel.

Finally, we expect that the Economic Development and Historic Tourism Summit will facilitate reinvestment in important landmarks in our downtown including the Bell, Aleda, Trenton Savings Bank, Tremont, and the Commonwealth Buildings.

One other exciting development I'd like to highlight is the planned expansion of the James Kerney Campus of Mercer County Community College in Trenton. In response to the growing need for academic and career opportunities for Trenton and other residents of Mercer County the college is launching a major expansion of its Trenton Campus. Future initiatives include a Center for Art and Design, Modeling and Simulation, and room for an expansion of the Health Science, Business and Entrepreneurial Studies curriculum.

All of these projects will help lead Trenton's strong economic growth. However, you cannot have growth without efficiency. Anecdotal evidence suggests that developers add a surcharge of approximately 10% when analyzing whether to do a project in Trenton, to account for the inefficiency of the City's Inspection and permitting process. That's why I am proud to announce a new, dual-track inspections process. Based on Philadelphia's



program, developers will be able, for a fee, to receive guaranteed dates for such things as plan approvals and construction permits. Using this system we will be able to cut time and provide certainty to developers, while forcefully administering, and enforcing the City's code requirements. To add additional efficiency, we recently rolled out an online payment system to accept payments via the City's website for land license renewals. Since January 1, 2011, \$250,000 in landlord licensing fees has been collected through the City's website. This simple change freed-up front office staff to process payments submitted over the counter and attend to other issues. The department also identified 67 unsafe and dangerous properties throughout the City that are in various stages of demolition.

On this point let me go one step further. I've already talked about how we are renovating and selling city-owned abandoned properties. But we must go beyond that to ensure economic growth. We *must* and we *will* tackle the city-wide problem of vacant and blighted properties. Arguably, the City owns 1200 unused properties. We are exploring market-based mechanisms designed to take these properties off the City's hands and get them back on the tax rolls. The City should not be in the real-estate business, and so we are looking at ways to use the markets to get these properties in the hands of private owners. That way they can be developed, adding to the City's economic growth. I am already looking forward to updating you on our progress on this crucial initiative.

Other crucial areas I am proud to highlight tonight are initiatives of our Trenton Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services who responded to a total of 9,745 and 5,233 calls respectively. The awarding of the \$13.7 million federally funded SAFER grant with the aide of our congressional delegation, allowed us to save 61 jobs, and to keep all of our firehouses open, at NO additional cost to the City of Trenton. We also received a 2011 Kenworth Command Vehicle. This vehicle will allow the Fire Department, to have a mobile Incident Command Post with Satellite live feed and state of the art interoperable communications.



The Trenton Fire Department, FMBA Local 206, FMBA Local 6, and the Family Network will launch: *the Readers are Leaders program*. The department will collect new and gently used books to create Neighborhood Book Stops. Children are invited to visit their local fire house to borrow a book, and when they bring it back, they may select another. Through *the Readers are Leaders*, firefighters will visit schools to read with students. Again, tonight you've heard how the pillar of shared partnership is the thread that binds the ideals of my vision.

The commitment to partnership is embedded in every City Department. For example, the Health & Human Services Department now shares an agreement with Princeton Borough to provide Spanish translation services to our growing and thriving Latino community. This agreement provides a unique approach for two government entities to work together to better serve our residents. We forged a new partnership with the Pennsylvania Veterinary School to enable students to obtain hands-on veterinary training at the Trenton Animal Shelter. The Trenton Animal Shelter's website is upgraded to create a fast-paced online pet adoption process. We co-sponsored a Blood Drive with the American Red Cross at Trenton's very own NJN studios. Tomorrow, we are partnering with the American Diabetes Association to host the Association's 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual "Alert Day" a one-day, *wake-up call* encouraging Trentonians to find out if they are at risk for developing Type 2 diabetes. Finally, the Environmental Services Division successfully obtained a \$20,000 grant from the State of New Jersey; from which it purchased a state-of-the-art Lead Paint Analyzer to test homes for lead paint.

Tonight you heard the accomplishments of our City's departments and my vision for transforming Trenton into a vibrant, greener city, with world-class safe parks and safe clean streets for our children. A growing City, with a strong economy that creates new private-sector jobs. The vision outlined is clear, with measurable tangible goals. Beloved, I will continue to put Trenton first. I know you will stand with me - as we revitalize Trenton together as partners. I am energized, optimistic, and enthusiastic. Trenton has undergone many transformative changes over the past 200 years.



Yet here we are, STILL STANDING. Here we are together. Let's continue to work together. Believe in each other. And, most importantly, create a place where our children, can be proud - to one day - raise their children in a thriving revitalized Capital City. Believe in Trenton! I assure you the State-of-OUR-City is well, and we are on our way. God Bless you, and God Bless the GREAT Capital City of Trenton!

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