

State of the City Address
October 20, 2009

I would like to recognize my family that is with us today. (Sisters and Brother) Welcome and thank you. I would like to give a special recognition to my Mother and Father-in-Law who came all the way from Tallahassee to be here today. Thanks Mom and Dad for being here -- it is special that you are here. It is 20 years ago this month that my Mother passed away from cancer--I miss her! I am thankful to have such a wonderful and supportive family. I would like to recognize my beautiful daughters, Stacy and Jenna. They are the mothers of my 7 beautiful grandchildren. My youngest, Kristi, is an army wife this year and she is stationed in Alaska.

Now I want to recognize my husband of 25 years. In fact, today is our 25th anniversary. This is some anniversary celebration isn't it? Just the two of us and a few hundred of our closest friends! Happy Anniversary Mark, I love you very much!

A special thanks to my pastor and my very supportive church family! I would like to recognize the event committee, (please stand and be recognized.) Would all city staff please stand and be recognized. Thank you for all your work.

Michael J. Fox said, "I am careful not to confuse excellence with perfection. Excellence I can reach for, perfection is God's business." With the support of those mentioned, the pursuit of excellence is made easier!

Homestead was incorporated in 1913; we are the second oldest city in Miami-Dade. We consist of 16 square miles and enjoy a City Council/City Manager form of Government. Council decides policy and the manager implements policy. Much has happened this year. I was recently elected to the Florida League of Mayors Board of Directors, and serve as a board member and your representative on the Metropolitan Planning Organization. This is the first time that the City of Homestead has representation on the MPO. These positions are beneficial to the city!

Homestead is a full service, self-sufficient city. We have a city owned and operated power plant, one of 32 in the state and the only in Miami-Dade County. We have a city owned and operated waste water treatment plant.

In the last few years, we have added over 1.5 million square feet of new retail space, and this year we have added an additional 260,000. sq. feet of retail. Some of the new businesses include:

Restaurants:

The Big Cheese (just opened), Longhorn Steakhouse, Olive Garden, Mama Mia's Italian Restaurant, Myagi Sushi, and Red Lobster is currently under construction, and of course Starbucks.

New Retail includes: Kohl's (Oct, 08,) Michaels Crafts, Petco, Ross, Staples, Bed, Bath & Beyond and The Sports Authority. It is my pleasure to announce that while the Nation was losing jobs and businesses, the city of Homestead opened 323 businesses with just over 2000 jobs. We recognize that people are still struggling and we are encouraging a local hiring preference for all businesses opening in Homestead.

We just celebrated the opening of the beautiful and classy Hampton Inn and Suites; it has meeting space and is a wonderful and welcome addition to Homestead. You should see it; it is what a Hotel should look like.

In May we celebrated the 2nd anniversary of the most beautiful hospital in Florida, a Baptist health facility that cost 145 million and is already planning an expansion. We are proud of the beautiful facility. The hospital has a great relationship with racing in Homestead. In fact before the Indy race, I welcomed an Indy car driver to the hospital for their health fair for a discussion on diabetes.

We'd like to thank Curtis Gray and the Speedway for hosting the State of the City here once again. The Speedway is making history this year. It is the first speedway ever to host all of the premier North American motorsports championships. What a distinction!

We will also have the first air show in 17 years in early November. We are all looking forward to Wings Over Homestead.

We installed our first cameras to catch red light runners; they have been in place for a few months. This will improve the safety factor for our residents who fear proceeding on a green light!

Two years ago we sold the last city owned portion of the Park of Commerce to A&H Commerce Park. Last October we attended a groundbreaking on 40 of the 100 acres. The DEA building is up and running and they had their grand opening last December. The FBI building is currently under construction. The Gold Coast Beverage distributorship has completed an expansion that doubled the size of the facility from 60,000 to 120,000 sq. feet.

Our City Departments are efficient, and more productive than ever before under the leadership of city manager Mike Shehadeh. He is a hard working visionary who has an open door policy with all council members. Some of his accomplishments include:

- The Carter settlement concerning the Bowling alley – 500,000-90,000
- Reliable Substation settlement – Saved Over \$350,000.
- Hearts and Soles Walk for project SOS- raised \$56,000.
- Restructuring of City Departments
 - The manager’s office – Saved over 301,000.
 - Parks, Recreation and maintenance services- saved 353,000.
 - General Services including:
 - CRA- Saved \$403,000.
 - Customer Service – Saved \$278,000.
 - Information Technology services – Saved \$192,000.

We have received almost 6 million dollars in State and Federal Parks Grants. (must also give credit to our congressman, Mario Diaz Balart and the entire delegation.)

- 401A retirement plans - We moved from the pension system. Moved from defined benefits to defined contributions. This will save the city millions long into the future!

I want to acknowledge our **City Clerk**, Mrs. Sheila Shedd who manages her office and staff with professionalism, wisdom and grace. The clerk’s office is responsible for the record keeping, and Under the Clerks office:

- City Channel HTV 77
Council meetings are aired 10am, 3pm, 7pm, and 7pm daily.

- Elections: A thanks to Councilwoman Nazy Sierra for working on the increase of voters.
Total # of registered voters- 19,973
Registration increased by 24%
AND...
- We have restructured our boards and committees and have streamlined the number of council meetings held per month. Reducing the number of meetings alone has saved the city a substantial amount.

Thanks to our city attorney Richard Weiss for your knowledge and expertise in dealing with such a busy city and council!

The Community Redevelopment Agency was grossly misused in the past and it is now serving the intent and purpose for which it was created. The CRA has changed for the better under the able direction of Councilman Melvin McCormick.

- With Parks and Recreation we completed the Ernestine Jackson Seymore Municipal Park
- Installed a number of new sidewalks and ramps throughout the SW.
- We reinstated Music in the Park and began the Krome Avenue Kruiise In to promote the downtown area. The average attendance has been 200 people. I have been attending them and even in the hot summer months they are extremely well attended!

Last year I attended a Main Street conference and came back with ideas to improve the downtown Historic area. Thus far we have planted 20 trees with more to come. We have planted Cassias, Oaks and Mahogany. Future improvements include the installation of signature park benches and bike racks. We are trying to create the look of a linear park. In conjunction with Homestead Energy Services, we will embark on the City's first Green Park lighting system by upgrading the lighting at Losner Park to LED lights

The CRA has created a plan to properly dispose of the properties it holds so when market conditions improve, the plan is in place to put these properties back on the tax roles where they belong.

The CRA continues to support the Chamber of Commerce and they are housed in the old Lilly Lawrence Bow Library. We have partnered with the chamber and they will be implementing the Façade improvement program

for the city. Mary Finlan does a wonderful job as the Executive Director and the new chair is the absolutely wonderful Tony Garcia.

The CRA also supports the Seminole Theatre and Art South. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Councilwoman Judy Waldman who is the liaison to both the Seminole Theatre project and Art South. The CRA also supports the Old Town Hall museum that is run by our own Ruth Campbell.

Development Services is under the able direction of Ms. Shari Kamali.

Thank you Councilwoman Wendy Lobos, Wendy is the chair of the city code committee. Some of the accomplishments:

- The medium density residential capacity study, which included an almost 2 year moratorium and resulted in a further reduction in housing density.
- We revised the SW master plan to allow property owners greater flexibility to make property improvements. A thank you to Councilman Melvin McCormick for his work on this.
- We adopted the AICUZ, to further show our support and commitment to the military and the Air Base, and to provide safety to our residents.
- I personally spearheaded the charge to revise the code to allow schools by a special exception in B1 and B2 zonings. We now have Mavericks Charter High School and the Dade Medical College because of the change!

When Homestead finally received a new Movie Theatre and its Chili's restaurant, we all rejoiced. But there was one problem; you could only turn right into and out of the plaza. We were told that there was no way we could get a left turn because of the close proximity to the turnpike. Well, I am a common sense person and said simply create another entrance and exit so our residents may turn left! After a couple of years of being told NO, We got our left turn in and we are currently under construction for the left turn out of the complex. And they said it couldn't be done!!

Utility Department – Councilwoman Wendy Lobos chairs the enterprise funds committee of which this department falls under. She sits on the board of the Florida Municipal Electrical Association representing the City of Homestead. This year we were lucky to find a highly qualified individual, Barbara Quinones, to head our city's Electric Utility Department—and by the way, she also happens to be the first female Electric Utilities director. We were successful in our submission of stimulus grant applications. I

receive nothing but glowing reports about both Councilwoman Lobos and Ms. Quinones.

Councilwoman Lobos also chairs the city **Finance Committee** (also part of the enterprise funds). This department which operates under the direction of Jan Smith, is recognized for their excellent work, along with Christi. They had a huge task this year when we received the numbers from the county concerning the 25% drop in property values! While we lost 1 billion in property values, we did not raise one single fee! We were able to balance the budget while trimming \$11 million dollars and cutting the size of government, and we did not eliminate ONE service. We received the GFOA's certificate of Achievement for Excellence in financial reporting. The award is based on a local government's willingness to go beyond the minimum requirements. This department had a successful integration of the Community Development Department into the finance department including the implementation and administration for the following programs:

- Disaster Relief initiative Phase I & Phase II
- CDBG Economic Development Grant
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program (almost 3 million in stimulus)
- CDBG 2008 and 2009 Entitlement programs

The Office of Budget and Performance received the very First Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the Budget book for FY 2008-2009.

The Enterprise Funds also cover the area of **General Services**. We have a new director, Jerry Estrada, and a new customer service Superintendent, Richard Vega. Councilwoman Lobos created a customer service task force to change and improve this department. The members focus on real and practical improvements (not lip service.) We have come a long way and we have a ways to go. Some of the changes include:

- Changed the method in which faxed account applications are processed. We now receive them by electronic fax only, eliminating paper waste while enhancing efficiency and cost effectiveness,
- Improved (still improving) customer service lobby to be more customer friendly.
- Expanded and improved the Call Center Queuing system to include a Spanish menu option. Also improved the call routing efficiency.
- Implemented FACTAct Red Flag rules and procedures for identity theft protection of customer information.

Fleet Management- The theme in all departments this year was efficiency and the elimination of waste. In Fleet, a vehicle –refurbishing program was begun which extended the life expectancy of vehicles in the police department and Solid Waste. This has resulted in substantial savings to the city.

We also implemented a new preventative maintenance program for all city vehicles and equipment. These programs ultimately save the city money and extend the service life of equipment. (Just makes sense, common sense.)

This brings me to the topic of take home police cars. Comments have been made, saying the city should end the program. This is actually a cost saver for the city. The life of the cars are greatly extended as only one officer is responsible for his vehicle not 3 or 4 per day as in shared cars. This also is a great safety factor as these cars are parked in family neighborhoods. This also enhances call response time if an officer is needed immediately. If an officer lives more than 25 miles away he or she must park the car at the State Trooper station and drive their personal cars home. A careful cost analysis done by the police chief and city managers has proved a financial savings.

The **IT department** is under the able direction of Councilwoman Nazy Sierra. Under her direction and with the assistance of our PIO Lillian Delgado, we deployed a newly redesigned City Web Site. This gives residents and employees the ability to better navigate and find information on our web site. We also gave the website an updated look. Thanks Councilwoman Sierra for your work in this area.

Human Resources Department is under the direction of Marcie Heese. This department is responsible for much including employee benefits, all hiring, insurances, etc. The department promotes a healthy workforce by continuing a wellness program which is a 12 week lifestyle change program. Since May of 2008, employees have lost 766 pounds. HR also held the 2nd annual Health & Wellness fair for all employees which included medical screenings for a variety of items. We also successfully sponsored a stop smoking program with Homestead Hospital. Thus far 6 employees have stopped smoking.

I would like to compliment Vice Mayor Burgess on the establishment of the Community Image Advisory Board (formerly the Beautification committee.) Jon spearheaded the NW cleanup which was a great success and brought the

idea of the Art in Public places, along with Councilwoman Lobos. Jon is the chair of the Mayor's youth council, this summer they hosted their second youth event called Get HYPE! I had requested that Jon make this a more service oriented council and he has successfully done that! Thank you Vice Mayor for your work.

I would like to acknowledge the great work of our Police department under the leadership of Chief Al Rolle, Major Kennedy and all the Captains. Councilman Tim Nelson chairs the Public Safety committee and he works very closely with the Police department and the Police Explorers. Councilman Nelson has made public safety priority one. Thank you Councilman Nelson for your unparalleled commitment to Public Safety. The department is comprised of Uniform Patrol, Canine Unit, traffic, homicide, SWAT, divers, dispatch, corrections, and public information.

Within the Police System is our **Project SOS and South Dade Weed & Seed**, which served 1,455 families that require support services such as counseling, financial assistance, re-location, assistance with obtaining restraining orders, referrals, etc. This department received grants this year totaling \$2,626,203.93. I have actively participated with SOS with the Toy distribution, violence awareness, back pack distribution, etc. I have seen first hand the work this department does. Plans are already being made for the 2nd annual Hearts & Soles 5k walk/run which will take place on February 6. Thanks to Sandi Nanni, Robin Wright and all the SOS/Weed &Seed staff.

The Parks, Recreation & Maintenance Services department is led by Director Robert Landen. This committee is chaired by Councilman Melvin McCormick and we have seen amazing things happen in just a very short time under their direction.

- Completed construction of Audubon Park.
- Successful completion of Harris Field Restrooms and Pavilion.
- James Archer Smith Park was completed without any delays or change orders. The Grand opening was July 7, 2009.
- Completed the Roscoe Warren Municipal park clean-up, (phase I)
- The William F. (Bill) Dickenson Senior Center will be opening in one month!!
- Brand Newly Opened Skate Park. The city saved over 100,000 by

coordinating with a neighboring City and relocating and installing their skate park equipment to Harris Field. Opened last Saturday (mention Michael Sierra story.)

We were awarded a \$100,000 grant to install a prefabricated restroom at Harris Field to accommodate the Dick Conley Football league and the skate park!

- We were awarded a \$188,100 grant from the Department of Health Resources & Services Administration to purchase furniture for the Senior Center.

WE have completed 6 park projects in fewer than 2 years, all funded with Zero tax dollars. They are funded by grants, forfeiture funds, Safe Neighborhood Parks dollars, etc. At a FLC conference this summer, we were in the grants workshop. I approached the woman with the listing of grants, told her where we were from and asked if we were missing out on applying for any funding. She literally laughed out loud and said, are you kidding? We always know we will be hearing from Homestead!

Public Works is under the direction of Julio Brea and they have many accomplishments.

I want to give a special thanks to Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart for always fighting for federal dollars for Homestead, along with the delegation of Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Lincoln DB, and Kendrick Meek.

Accomplishments include:

- SW 328 street (N Canal DR.) lighting project that will consist of the installation of decorative street lighting to improve visibility along SW 328 street. The cost is approximately 1.35 million funded from Highway stimulus funds; (MPO) Construction is expected to start soon.

- We are going to acquire two trolley style buses to service local circulator routes within city limits. These are also funded by the stimulus and also come from the MPO. This was something I asked the manager for almost 2 years ago and it will be happening very soon. Working with MDTA, we will provide a seamless bus route operation. Funding received for the project is \$550,000.

- We are currently working on a bus shelter project, which includes the installation of approximately 40 bus shelters throughout the city along current and proposed bus routes. They are currently in the procurement phase and are coordinated through the MDTA.

- We are nearing completion on the design of our Downtown Flood Control Project and should be going out to bid very soon. Again, this is a fully funded project by the EPA and CDBG's. This will greatly enhance the flood control enhancements in the downtown historic area.
- The city received grant funds to purchase two recycling trucks which will be used for the new Single source recycling program which will be kicked off in-house beginning in January!

I would like to commend the excellent work of Councilwoman Nazy Sierra for her work in Education. With her committees, she successfully created an educational compact with the school board. Her work in education with the partnerships she has created has resulted in much improved schools. We now have a city with no F schools, where we had 6, in 2007. We now have 11 A schools up from 3 in 2007. Working with councilwoman Sierra we have encouraged and fostered a great working relationship with Charter Schools and this year we brought 3 new schools, one high school and 1 k-8, and a K-4. Two are Somerset academies, and the other is the Mavericks High School. She recently created the Education foundation to fund much needed supplies and provide assistance to local schools.

Councilwoman Sierra is also responsible for the Homestead 100 to celebrate our 100th birthday in 2013. She has many exciting events planned for the city.

She is also responsible for the design and selection of the monument signs you will soon see throughout the city.

Nazy conducted a communications workshop that included the council and all department heads ways we could better communicate with the community. She created a city of Homestead Facebook which currently has over 1,150 members.

She also developed a voter registration team to educate the community on the importance of registering to vote.

Along with Public Safety, Councilman Tim Nelson chairs the Business Development committee. He created a welcome packet for all new businesses coming to Homestead. He also partnered with the Chamber of Commerce on the Downtown Business Crime watch. While Councilman Nelson is quiet, he is always working behind the scenes.

While Councilman Melvin McCormick heads the parks and the CRA, he also took on a few personal challenges. He brought the issue of the incomplete and embarrassing Holiday Home makeover mess that we

inherited from the prior administration. He brought it to me, I was able to secure donations and outside funding and a project that wasn't completed in 3 years, was completed in 3 months. He also spearheaded the Rice to the Occasion to acquire and ship rice to Haiti to feed the starving people after the devastation of many hurricanes. He also spearheaded the SW cleanup project that was a major success. Melvin we are so proud of your commitment to your community and your city!

I would like to acknowledge and thank all of the people who donate their time in serving on city boards. You make our city better.

This past year brought many challenges, challenges only make you stronger. I am committed to serving you and making this city stronger every day. As your Mayor I love serving you, Grace Spear said, "The more we give of anything, the more we shall get back."