

Mayor Donna Pittman
2018 Doraville State of the City Address
Friday, April 20, 2018

Good evening and welcome. It is good to see everyone tonight.

Before going any further, I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard to make tonight special. The Dunwoody High School JROTC was fantastic, as was Wax in singing the National Anthem. Our young people from Cary Reynolds were wonderful. Pastor Kelley thank you for delivering the invocation. Chris Justice, I have known you for years and never knew about your emcee talents. Thank you.

This evening I am joined by many special people, but I want to take a personal privilege to share with you that members of my family are here. I am very lucky to have the love and support of my husband, children and their families. They are all so patient and understanding when I rush out to a meeting or on the nights when I cannot be at home for dinner with them. Thank you and I love you!

To be in Doraville, at this time; and, to be at this place, here on Park Avenue, is a privilege for me and an opportunity for all of us to celebrate our City, which by the way dates back to its founding in 1871.

This is a time in our City when we are on the cusp of so many good things happening. And the place -- Park Avenue, is where we have made memories with holiday celebrations and other special events Day-to-day, we gather on Park Avenue to conduct the public's business at City Hall, the police building and our municipal courts; and children and adults alike enjoy the City Library. And oh yes, this past year we have even had new national TV series filmed right where we are tonight, something you will hear more about later.

As I come before you this evening, I don't come as one individual, but as a representative of all our residents and businesses and the many visitors who come to enjoy our City. Of particular pleasure, I also come on behalf of the entire governing body of Doraville. It is great to work closely with my colleagues on City Council and I want to recognize each of them at this time. Please stand as I call your name.

Robert Patrick, Councilmember and Mayor Pro-tem.

Mrs. Pam Fleming

Mr. Joseph Geierman

Mrs. Shannon Hillard

Ms. Stephe Koontz

Mr. MD Naser

The work conducted by the City Council requires fortitude and commitment, please join me with a round of applause to thank the City Council.

Success is never by mere chance. It takes a vision and planning and most of all success is the result of working together. The Doraville City Council is working collectively, and I look forward to our continued journey together as we serve our City.

When I thought about tonight and how I might pack into a few minutes of time the many things that have happened since this time last year, three words came to me that sum up the focus of our work.

People, Purpose and Progress.

Together we are on a journey to serve our City by thinking and caring first about **people**; secondly, never forgetting the **purpose** for which our City government exists; and third, ensuring our decisions and how we do the work of government leads to **progress**. So, for my few minutes here tonight, I want to talk about the **people, purpose and progress** of Doraville.

The People

Doraville is a wonderful reflection of America. President Jimmy Carter perhaps said it best. *We are “not a melting pot, but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes and different dreams”*. In Doraville with those differences we are striving for the epitome of the words written as part of the United States seal—and I quote, “out of many, one”.

Out of many, do come one. This is true as we think about the many Doraville residents and others, past and present. I recall contributions of the talent, resources, commitment and certainly love of the City given by the Creel family, the Maloney’s, the Malcomb’s, and the Galloway’s, the Flower’s, the Chestnut’s, and the Jett’s, and many others. Less we not forget our former Mayors and City Council Members. Although many have passed on, members of their families remain in Doraville and continue

to work for the good of the City in informal and formal leadership positions. We thank you and your family members for the devotion to Doraville.

And today, not only do we have our resident leaders, but we have state, county and officials from other cities—the many that come to help and support Doraville, as we support them in their endeavors.

At this time, will all **visiting** (current and past) elected officials, please stand.

Let's give them a hand for the support they give to Doraville.

As we work together, let our decisions continue to serve the many. Again, thank all of the elected officials for being here tonight.

I also want to recognize those seeking public office. We appreciate that you have decided to seek a leadership role. We have elections coming up this year at the state level and it is important that we all get to know those who are running for Office; will you please stand and be recognized.

As I continue to think about the first element of Doraville's success, its people, I constantly also think about those who do not seek leadership positions, but simply go about their daily lives being good neighbors. As I look out into the audience this evening, it is you that the City Council and I serve. Tonight, is a celebration of you.

Doraville is unique in that although we are a part of the metropolitan area, we continue our hometown feel and approach. We care about each other—neighbor to neighbor looking out for one another. It is not uncommon for neighbors to reach out if someone is ill, has a family emergency or just needs someone to help them with an errand.

The social activities in the neighborhoods are always fun, whether it is an informal gathering of neighbors or a planned activity like the popular holiday lighting on Addison Drive during the December holidays. Every day, I hear of a resident or a business that has helped someone else in our community.

The dictionary defines community as a group of people living in the same place or a group of people having a particular characteristic in common. But in Doraville, that cannot and is not our definition. We are a community of individuals who appreciate the uniqueness in one another and transcend our differences with a feeling of friendship. No matter how streets may change, or buildings may be built, we must endeavor to always be an openhearted place.

Always helping us to be a welcoming, safe and embracing community are our City employees. This year within the corporate limits of Doraville we were once again recognized as one of the safest cities in the state of Georgia. Calls for service were down by more than 4,500.

Thank you to our police officers and the civilian employees in our police department. Our police department is one of the finest you will find anywhere. This past year the police attended over 60 events. We had a successful National Night Out event, organized by the Police Department. Over 500 adults and children were in attendance.

On behalf of the community, I cannot say enough good things about our police department.

Our Police are not alone, in keeping the City safe, friendly and efficient. It takes all of our City employees. One of the important things about Doraville employees is how our employees work together. For example, preparing for the annual Tea Walk, required not only police presence at the event, but our maintenance workers performed street sweeping duties, put up barricades as needed, and those within the various administrative offices worked to ensure plans and permits were in order. We often take these duties for granted, but it is all of our dedicated City employees and contract employees that make sure City government runs smoothly.

Our employees are honest, full of integrity and hard-working. Shortly after swearing in the new City Council in January of this year, we appointed our new permanent City Manager, Regina Williams-Gates. Ms. Gates has extensive experience both nationally and internationally and is moving forward with initiative both inside the organization; within the community and regionally. Also, just last week Ms. Gates hired a new permanent City Clerk, Raquel Gonzalez. Ms. Gonzalez has been with the City of Sandy Springs for several years and we look forward to her starting with us on Monday.

Other new appointments to vacant City positions are coming soon. With the blending of our new and existing employees we have a great team. City employees, please stand. Let's show them our appreciation.

Thank you for everything that you do for Doraville.

I do want to call out one City employee who I have known for years who is retiring from the City -- Bob Kelley. Many of you also know Bob as a Northwood resident. Bob has been the man behind the camera at all of our City events and the author of the City quarterly newsletter, the Insight, which he started for us five years ago. Bob also authored a book on Doraville's history. Bob, thank you for your hard work, and all the best in retirement. We expect to see another book authored by you.

People—not bricks and mortar -- but people; residents, businesses, City employees are who and what makes Doraville a City in which we can be proud to make our home and in which to work.

Purpose

Let me turn to **purpose**. Thomas Jefferson well before it was known how complex and international American cities would become, said, "The purpose of government is to enable the people of a nation to live in safety and happiness. Government exist for the interests of the governed, not for the governors".

When I add Jefferson's observation, a soul-searching question asked by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "What are you doing for others?" there is no doubt about the purpose for which government is intended.

I am pleased to say over the last year, much has happened in Doraville which is the purpose of government. We have been about open government; reaching out across City boundaries, as well as forming partnerships with community-based organizations and the private sector to enhance the community and facilitate economic vitality. We have also advanced new programs and we are increasing amenities in the City.

The natural elements of earth-wind and fire have impacted us this year. Unfortunately, we have had a couple of significant home fires, a tropical storm, snow and ice and a flooding on our major highway. But we have come through it all. When Tropical Storm Irma hit, we quickly cleaned up debris, worked with Georgia Power to clear streets so electrical power was returned. But moreover, we marshalled volunteers and City employees to help out to take a plane load and two trailers of law enforcement supplies to Houston Texas when Hurricane Harvey struck and did substantial damage. We also took a trailer of household supplies to Miami Florida when Irma hit them harder than us.

Although not on a river, one perhaps could have renamed Buford Highway the Buford River, last month when a broken water main poured out gallons of water on the street and impacted all of DeKalb County.

However, the resilience of everyone and the partnership we have with DeKalb County resulted in the leak to soon being fixed. And to the police officer and radio dispatcher taking the calls at 2 o'clock in the morning, we say thank you to your alertness and quick call to the County.

Doraville is not about to allow adversities to deter us, instead we move pass them and we continue to grow stronger, concentrating on the positives.

This Spring, Metro City Bank completed their new corporate headquarters. Metro City Bank is a state-chartered bank and FDIC insured financial institution.

Noteworthy about the Metro City Bank building is that it is the first, of what we envision to be many buildings along the corridor, that implemented our new urban design standards when building their new corporate headquarters. As you walk down the street, they are a great example of making Buford Highway friendly and walkable.

Speaking of walkable, if you have not been to the Heights at Carver Hills, which held their ribbon cutting in February, you must visit the neighborhood.

Carver Hills will have 50 new single-family homes and 200 townhomes. Once just a graphic vision that we all looked at on paper are new neighborhood streets lined with sidewalks and trees; constructed are model homes now open for viewing and coming out of the ground are the first homes already purchased. Planned for the future is a multi-use path that will connect our newest neighborhood in Doraville to downtown and the MARTA station.

Last year, we announced the new corporate headquarters of Serta Simmons, which would include over five acres of the Assembly site. In this \$65 million-dollar development that will house 500 employees, the new office building is well under construction. This six (6) story building can be seen when you drive or walk by the site. Plans to celebrate the topping of the building are well underway and the occupancy and grand opening of this new office complex is anticipated to occur in early, 2019.

Doraville, this past year has seen 114 new businesses permitted, totaling \$300 million in direct investment, and another \$100 million pledged.

I have more to tell you about economic development that is occurring in the City but let me turn for a moment to talk about what one may call Doraville goes Hollywood. Last month Third Rail Studios, also located on the Assembly site became the first Wired Certified film studio in North America. This designation was bestowed on the studio upon a review of the property being best in class in connectivity, technological infrastructure and readiness to adopt emerging technologies. For us layman to see this technology in person, I recommend you go see the new film “Rampage” starring Dwayne Johnson, The Rock, out in theatres now, to see the results of all of this new technology.

Rampage, a lot of which was filmed right in the Third Rail Studios has had a \$50-million positive impact on Georgia’s economy.

Also, you don’t have to leave home to see more filming that took place in Doraville. Have you seen Good Girls on Monday night TV? Good Girls, and the new Dynasty and Lodge 49 TV series were all filmed in Doraville, and used some of our City facilities, such as the Library, Court Building and the old Police Station all right here on Park Avenue. The use of City streets and facilities has brought in revenue, that we anticipate growing in upcoming years.

In August of last year, we completed an LCI—Livable Community Initiative of Buford Highway. The study was a joint effort between the cities of Doraville and Chamblee. Out of the study has come the vision to transform Buford Highway into an urban and walkable corridor, with an emphasis on improving pedestrian and bicycle mobility, with enhanced intersections, economic development and public art.

Buford Highway runs through several cities, with no real redevelopment having occurred in years. Its transformation will not come easy but we will continue to make advancements. One of the larger more daunting steps is to move from mainly commercial activities on the highway to mixed-use redevelopments comprised of residential and commercial.

The Nexus project is envisioned to be the first of this kind of mixed use on Buford Highway. In the development world, especially private development, progress is driven by the financial market’s readiness. We remain optimistic about this project.

Moving forward is the new elementary school planned on Shallowford Road. We are excited about the design of the school, which will be a wonderful learning environment and a community asset. The school

is being designed, using a DeKalb County prototype that allows for the classrooms to be partitioned off, so parts of the building may be used by the City during after-school hours for public activities and events. City staff and School staff are meeting, and it is expected that demolition of the former apartments that are now on the school site will begin soon. Demolition permits already have been submitted.

In presentations like this, we talk a lot about development and new construction, but I am very proud of what is occurring within existing public spaces.

The City Library, which is an affiliate of the DeKalb County library system had a wonderful year, with lots of activities and our library is also a learning institution. There are computers available for public use. The rooms of the library are a friendly environment for storytelling, acquiring consumer information and a host of events occur there.

I want to thank the Friends of the Library for your unwavering support of our library. It is volunteer efforts such as the Friends of the Library that extend our resources far beyond they would otherwise go.

We have other partners in the community I also want to recognize this evening.

I Care Atlanta, Inc.

I Will Survive, Inc.

Paul Murphy Boxing Club

CPAS

The Korean American Association of Greater Atlanta

Eagles Club of Doraville

Kiwanis

During this last year in collaboration with Trees-Atlanta and part of our Georgia Arbor Day celebration, the City along with over 100 community volunteers planted 81 trees in Honeysuckle Park.

Two other new initiatives this year which are just starting are the Adopt-A-Spot, under the city-wide Doraville Volunteer Services and Text 9-1-1.

The Adopt-A-Spot Program affords residents of all ages and businesses the opportunity to form a partnership between volunteers and the City to perform clean-up and beautification efforts in areas

throughout the City. We hope that many of you will be volunteering for a spot near you or for which you have some affinity. Information will be on the website as to how to sign up.

The City now has the capability to receive request for help via a text message if ever you are in a situation where you cannot use voice call. 9-1-1 texts are made just like a regular text if you must remain quiet in order to stay safe. While text 9-1-1 is available call if you can, text if you can't.

There are more good things that have and are happening in the City, so let's move on to some of our new horizons-- leading to the third topic for tonight.

Progress

Internally, the City Administration is starting the review of our zoning ordinance and conditional use permits. Also, under review is a refinement of permit application and review process to streamline procedures and reduce turnaround times.

Additionally, under review and change are ways to enhance public outreach, improve communication linkages and use additional ways to invite the public participation into project prioritizing so that we ensure transparency and most important accountability to the public.

On the development side, plans are turning into reality. I am pleased to announce the Assembly Community Improvement District will soon deploy the region's first autonomous shuttle running between assembly yards and Doraville MARTA station. I had to look up information about autonomous shuttles. These are clean energy vehicles that operate without drivers. Each shuttle will hold about 12 people and is able to move along the designated pathway using guidance and detection systems that are very cutting-edge technology. We hope this will be the beginning of such shuttle connection between Doraville and Chamblee.

Also, the Georgia Department of Transportation—GDOT has committed to install a managed lane interchange directly to Doraville MARTA through the Assembly site. The managed lanes will operate with MARTA and regional buses, connecting the entire Northern Arc suburbs to Doraville station.

In the Assembly yards, streets, utilities, hardscape, green space & parks; including the Assembly Line linear park are under construction with completion being phased-in between August 2018 and March 2019.

While the names cannot be released by Integral at this time, but will in the coming months, two best-in-class developments with 500+ units of multi-family and 250,000 square feet of creative office space is in the agreement stage. Also, coming soon there will be a 10-screen art style cinema and draft house and 12,000 square feet food hall.

Good news takes time—and this is certainly good news. Integral is a great partner in advancing the City and I want to acknowledge them for all they are doing to bring world class development to Doraville.

To coin Robert Frost, the poet, we have promises to keep and miles to go because this City cannot stop to sleep, but that can only occur with everyone working together and celebrating the good. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, said, “I can do things you cannot; you can do things I cannot. Together we can do great things” -- for our City.

Thank you.