

2019 DORAVILLE STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

MAYOR DONNA PITTMAN

May 3, 2019

Good evening, everyone, and welcome to the 2019 State of the City event. It is good to see all of you here. This is a wonderful evening, beautiful weather and a great place to be, here at Assembly Yards.

Before going any further, I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard to make tonight special. Our Color Guard was incredible. Thank you not only for being here tonight to present the colors, but for all you have done and continue to do to help keep our state and our country safe.

Wax Frias-Louden, thank you for your rendering of the National Anthem. You bring out the patriotism in all of us with your voice and the heart you put into your singing. Bishop C.D. Gearing Jr., thank you for the inspirational invocation.

Keegan Leiba, thank you for being our emcee tonight — you are awesome.

Tonight, I am joined by many special people, but extraordinary to me are the members of my family who are here. I have the good fortune of the love and support of my husband, children and their families. When I become consumed with multitasking or I hurry out to a Council meeting on my wedding anniversary or on the nights when I cannot be at home with them for dinner, they are all so patient and understanding. Thank you for your support. I love you!

As I come before you tonight, it is on behalf of the City Council, the City Staff and our many public and private-sector partners.

Our success is the result of Doraville's residents and businesses and the collective effort of my colleagues on the City Council, whom I want to recognize at this time. Please stand as I call your name:

Councilmember and Mayor Pro-tem Shannon Hillard

Councilmember Joseph Geierman

Councilmember Stephe Koontz

Councilmember MD Naser

Councilmember Robert Patrick

Councilmember Pam Fleming

Earlier this year, Councilmember Fleming announced she would not seek re-election this coming November. Pam, although we will have an opportunity to recognize you more formally in the coming months, I want to tell you now, we will miss you. Personally, as a friend, we have shared family experiences, and professionally you have been a caring and dedicated public servant. Thank you for your commitment to our City.

The City Council works persistently to develop City policies, but most importantly to set a vision and direct the shared efforts of our City. Please join me in a round of applause for the entire Doraville City Council.

Before we started this evening, I spent a few minutes talking to some old friends from other cities, the county and the state, and I am glad you could join us tonight. Will all visiting (current and past) elected and appointed officials, please stand and be recognized. Let's give them a round of applause. One can get in trouble trying to call everyone out individually, but there are a few people I must acknowledge not only their presence here tonight, but the partnership and alliance shared between them and the City.

We have a representative from Congresswoman Lucy McBath's office. State Senator Sally Harrell is here and State Representative Scott Holcomb is with us — thank you for being here. And our newest State Representative, Mike Wilensky, is also here. He may not want everyone to know, but I have to let all of you in on a little secret: Today is Representative Wilensky's birthday. When I asked him if he would be here, he did not hesitate to say yes. Happy Birthday and we all wish you many more. Commissioner Nancy Jester, thank you for being here. I am sorry that Michael Thurmond could not be here, but we look forward to our ongoing relationship and the development of the Dekalb County Transportation Plan.

Again, welcome to our elected and appointed officials.

Doraville residents and businesses, welcome to you because you are the real V. V. I. P.'s (Very-Very-Important People).

No one works harder to enhance the quality of life in our community than our City staff. Our employees are fiercely loyal and committed to the City, as witnessed tonight by the fact that the three most senior employees together total over 100 years of public service.

Joey Sanders has the longest tenure of all City employees. Joey has been with the City for over 40 years. Many of you know Joey. Unfortunately, he took ill suddenly and is in the hospital. Our thoughts and prayers are with him. Lieutenant Parham and Sergeant Lowe, please stand.

Led by our City Manager, Regina Williams-Gates, will all of the Doraville City staff and our private contract employees please stand. The City staff is lean. Often when we talk about a department, we are talking about a one-person operation. So, our staff works long hours, they come in on their scheduled days off, and they cover multiple responsibilities. Without them, the City would be at a loss. Thank you so much.

Year after year, I am happy to report to you our City is a safe place to live, work and visit, thanks to our Police Department. Both our sworn officers and the civilian employees in emergency communications, records, the jail and courts enforce our laws in a fair manner. With a difficult job to perform, our Police Department protects and serves with the highest standards. We don't say it enough, but we appreciate you so much.

Tomorrow starts today!

Although I am more of a soccer fan than a basketball fan, the Atlanta Hawks basketball team has a saying that captures it all: Tomorrow Starts Today! Right now! Right here! Just look around. When General Motors closed its automotive operations nearly 11 years ago and related suppliers followed suit, some said, “. . . *This is the beginning of the end.*” Over time, others have said, “. . . *When will the wait be over? When will we see redevelopment?*” But I, and many of you, knew today would come. Right now, right here — just look around. To the contrary of those who doubted our future, General Motors' departure was not a

beginning of the end, but instead we are in the midst of newness and major revitalization. Doraville is on the rise. Several projects and initiatives that I told you last year were on the horizon have come, or are coming, to fruition.

Someone once said, “Long-term economic value and development commitments do not come overnight,” and they were right. Last year, we announced the new corporate headquarters of Serta Simmons Bedding was under construction. We are pleased that earlier this afternoon Serta Simmons had its grand opening ceremony. This corporate headquarters includes over five acres of the Assembly site. This \$65 million development that will house 500 employees is a reality. Now, that is long-term economic value added to our city. This six-story building you see behind me, adorned by the Serta Simmons Bedding logo, can be seen when you drive or walk by the site. Serta executives and employees, we welcome you to our City and look forward to a lasting partnership.

Also, this afternoon, Governor Brian Kemp and others of us took the inaugural ride in the region’s first autonomous shuttle, which is U.S.-manufactured by NAVYA. The shuttle is a clean-energy vehicle that operates without drivers. It will follow a route from Assembly Yards to the Doraville MARTA station scheduled on 15-minute intervals, as well as on demand. Each shuttle holds about 15 people and is able to move along the designated pathway using guidance and detection systems. Right here, right now ... Can you believe it?! I call that very cutting-edge technology. We have representatives from NAVYA here with us this evening. Please stand and be recognized.

Although we could not plan rides on the shuttle for tonight, those of you who have not seen the autonomous vehicle, please stop by and take a look at it. We envision this as the beginning of a future shuttle connection between Doraville and our sister city, Chamblee.

It does not end with autonomous shuttles. We are also excited about the advances made by Georgia Power to support the State of Georgia in attracting more residents to drive electric vehicles and businesses to electrify their vehicle fleets. This Georgia Power effort can help cities enhance our overall sustainability goals.

I am announcing this evening that at an upcoming Council meeting, I will discuss with my colleagues on City Council and with the City Administration to make it one of Doraville's priorities to confer with Georgia Power to develop a plan for the strategic placement of Doraville's first public EV charging station. I also want to seek to have a resolution adopted to encourage developers of residential projects to include charging stations within their developments. You may not know it, but the federal government offers individual citizens an income tax credit of \$7,500 for owning and driving a battery electric vehicle. Having a select number of charging stations in Doraville will advance our efforts to truly become a Smart City that uses technology to protect and sustain our environment. Being technologically smart will attract visitors and new residents to our city.

If you are curious to know more or are thinking about purchasing an electric vehicle, check out the ones Georgia Power has brought out tonight.

In April 2018, Doraville became a welcoming city and part of the Welcoming America network. A welcoming city means we desire and strive to have our residents feel safe, respected and comfortable being themselves, and all of us sharing our cultural and ethnic uniqueness. Edward Kennedy said, “. . . We've learned that we're all better off when everyone is included in the opportunities of this great nation.” In Doraville, our commitment is to not just acknowledge diversity, but to embrace inclusion.

We are pleased to welcome St. Martin's Episcopal School to our community. Last year, the Dunwoody-based institution bought a derelict office complex in the City on Stewart Road that had been abandoned for more than 10 years. St. Martin's will be locating the school's new athletic complex on the 7.5-acre site. With work well underway, the complex will feature soccer and multi-purpose fields, a playground and an amphitheater. Parts of the park amenities are planned to be available to the public. We very much appreciate the St. Martin's School's confidence and investment in the city, and we look forward to seeing the new park come to fruition.

Coming up is the 2020 Census. We need to make this a complete count. The City Administration will be reaching out to ensure transparency and community engagement. It has been proven that we trust those that we know best. Therefore, we will be asking for everyone's help to explain the census and encourage your family, friends and neighbors to participate. The census is used for decisions at all levels of government, including receiving and allocating funds that help the community. For example, the census is used to forecast and plan for community health care and drawing school district boundaries and election districts. We can all benefit from a complete count, so please help us spread the word to not be afraid to participate.

Progress is not only realized through redevelopment. It comes in the form of advancing thoughtful policy as well. Last fall, we were proud to adopt a historic nondiscrimination ordinance that crystalizes our commitment to inclusiveness. Only the second of its kind in Georgia, the measure prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, language and other differences, in private employment, housing and public accommodations. Thanks to the Council for making this a reality. To say that we're

welcoming to all, to say that we're progressive and inclusive, is not enough. To codify one's values is the strongest instrument of expression a city can make, and Doraville is doing its part.

During this last year in collaboration with Trees Atlanta, along with a grant from the NFL Super Bowl Urban Forestry Program, the city along with over 50 community volunteers planted more than 40 trees at Cary Reynolds Elementary and Sequoyah Middle schools. With additional money in the tree fund, the City will organize three more tree plantings this fall. It is our continued promise to remain Tree City USA.

The Carver Hills residential area when completed will have 50 new single-family homes and 200 townhomes. Once just a graphic vision that we all looked at on paper, it is a new neighborhood with residents that have moved in. The streets are now lined with sidewalks and trees. Planned for the future is a multi-use path that will connect our newest neighborhood in Doraville to downtown and the MARTA station.

Just across the roadway from Carver Hills, I am pleased to announce the owners of the former Friday's Plaza shopping center are pursuing approval to redevelop the center into the Village at Tilly Mill, which will be a mixed-use development, maintaining some commercial along with multi-family residential. This will further the City's Comprehensive Plan vision to promote neighborhood centers.

The coming years also promise to be banner years for our revitalization efforts along the I-85 corridor. We are delighted to soon welcome the home improvement mall along the once underutilized site near the City's border with Gwinnett County. At 320,000 square feet, the stunning new facility will house over 400 showrooms, featuring everything from

plumbing to appliances. What's more, Improve USA will employ over 500 people and represents a \$200 million investment in our city.

In Assembly Yards, streets, utilities, hardscape, green space and parks, including the Assembly park, are under construction with completion being phased-in between August 2018 and March 2019. Five years ago, on the site where we now stand, sat a boarded-up plant that was a security hazard and a shadow of the employer of 4,000 people.

Across the parking lot, we have Third Rail Studios, where Netflix is creating content and employing another 500 people annually.

Combined with the 450-plus jobs generated by Asbury Automotive at the Nissan and Infinity dealerships, today Assembly directly employs nearly 1,500 people, not counting an additional 300 people who will be employed in the construction of the site. The public can from this day forward enjoy two miles of multi-use trails and parks right here in this fabulous new section of the City of Doraville.

We are grateful for the progress we have witnessed to date, yet more exciting development is on the way: 750 residential units; 300,000 square feet spec creative office space; 125,000 square feet of retail. Also, coming soon there will be a 10-screen, art-style cinema and draft house and a 12,000-square-foot food hall.

The economic development success Doraville has witnessed since October 2014 did not occur by accident. It took hard work and strategic collaboration.

Our City is 148 years young. In two years, we will celebrate our 150th Anniversary as a City. I intend to appoint a committee of community members of all ages to begin the planning and fundraising for activities throughout our 150th year that will culminate with a major celebration event. I want a historical aspect to some of the activities to honor our past, and a time capsule to bridge our present and the future. You will hear more about this initiative within the next several months. I hope some of you will volunteer to work to make this a fun and educational time in the continued making of Doraville's history.

The state of Doraville is strong. But our work is not complete yet. I look forward to us all working together until the work is done. Our grand vision is to be a community of caring, inclusive people and a city that is connected, walkable and enjoyable for all.

Tomorrow starts today!