

STATE OF THE CITY – 2007

Mobile Mayor Sam Jones

April 4, 2007

ALLOW ME TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK YOU THE CITIZENS AND FRIENDS OF MOBILE FOR YOUR LOVE, SUPPORT AND DEDICATION TO OUR CITY. THE PARTNERSHIPS AND COOPERATION THAT HAVE BEEN AND CONTINUE TO BE SO IMPORTANT TO OUR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ARE THE DIFERENCE BETWEEN POTENTIAL AND SUCCESS. I WANT TO THANK OUR CITY COUNCIL, LED BY PRESIDENT REGGIE COPELAND AND VICE PRESIDENT FRED RICHARDSON, FOR THEIR INSPIRATION AND COOPERATION IN OUR QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE.

I AM EXTREMELY PROUD OF OUR DEPARTMENT HEADS AND STAFF WHO HAVE ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE OF PROVIDING THE VERY BEST SERVICES AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THIS STATE BY EMBRACING CITISMART, THE MOST DEMANDING MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THIS NATION.

YOU HAVE SEEN OUR VIDEO PRESENTATION AND OUR PRINTED REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF CITY GOVERNMENT. I AM SURE YOU WILL FIND THEM INFORMATIVE AND IMPRESSIVE. FOR MOST OF MY ADULT LIFE I HAVE HEARD THE CITY OF MOBILE DESCRIBED AS THE CITY OF PERPETUAL POTENTIAL. THAT PART OF OUR HISTORY IS OVER. OUR POTENTIAL IS NOW THE REALITY OF OPPORTUNITY, PROGRESS, GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY. THE QUESTION IS - ARE WE PREPARED FOR OUR NEW POSITIONING AS A GROWING PROGRESSIVE CITY.

SMALL TOWNS HAVE SIGHT BUT PROGRESSIVE METROPOLITAN CITIES HAVE VISION. THE CITY OF MOBILE IS THE ECONOMIC HUB OF OUR REGION. IT IS DESTINED TO GROW. WE CANNOT ADDRESS TODAY'S PROSPERITY WITH YESTERDAY'S MENTALITY. WE CANNOT HANDLE TODAYS PASSENGER OR COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC WITH YESTERDAY'S INFRASTRUCTURE. WE CANNOT IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY WITHOUT EXPANDED RESOURCES. WE CANNOT GROW AS A CITY WITHOUT EXPANDING OUR AREA. WE CANNOT BE RESPONSIVE TO OUR WORK FORCE NEEDS WITHOUT CHANGE AT ALL LEVELS OF OUR ECUCATION PROCESS. WE WILL ONLY BE SUCCESSFUL WITH UNITY OF PURPOSE, SINCERITY, COMMITMENT AND THE REALIZATION THAT CHANGE IS INEVITABLE. SOMEONE ONCE SAID THAT WHETHER YOUR ALARM CLOCK SOUNDS OR NOT, MORNING WILL COME.

IT IS MY GOAL TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES THAT COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT OUR PROGRESS AND OPPORTUNITY TO BE THE GREATEST CITY IN THIS NATION.

SO LET ME COMMIT TO YOU TODAY THAT I WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SEE TO IT THAT OUR CITY WILL NOT BOG DOWN BECAUSE OF INACTION.

I WANT TO TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO HIGHLIGHT SOME ACTIVITIES THAT I BELIEVE ARE VITAL AND IN SOME CASES CRITICAL TO OUR CONTINUED SUCCESS AS

A REGION. I CHOSE TO USE THE WORD "REGION" BECAUSE IN A REAL SENSE THAT IS WHAT DETERMINES THE CHARACTER OF OUR AREA. WHILE THE CITY OF MOBILE IS THE METROPOLITAN HUB FOR THE REGION, PARTNERSHIPS THROUGHOUT THE REGION ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF OUR AREA.

THE PROSPERITY AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING ARE HISTORIC FOR OUR CITY. THE GLOBILIZATION THAT HAS TRANSFORMED OUR COMMUNITY IS THE ENVY OF THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES. THE REAL TEST IS HOW WE HANDLE OUR OPPORTUNITIES. THERE ARE SOME CHALLENGES WE MUST OVERCOME THAT COULD THREATEN OUR CONTINUED SUCCESS AS A REGION. LET ME JUST BRIEFLY MENTION THOSE CHALLENGES THAT I CONSIDER TO BE VITAL AND URGENT.

WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT

WE HAVE THE POTENTIAL OF OVER 5,000 NEW JOBS OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. OUR ABILITY TO PROVIDE A PREPARED WORK FORCE FOR THOSE JOBS AS WELL AS OUR PRESENT WORK FORCE IS VITAL. WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT IS A SERIOUS PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN K-12, POST SECONDARY EDUCATION, HIGHER EDUCATION, THE COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY.

K-12 MUST PROVIDE STUDENTS WHO ARE CAPABLE OF ACQUIRING A LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL COMPETENCE THAT ALLOWS THEM TO COMPETE IN THE GLOBAL WORK PLACE. THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS SELECTED MOBILE AND NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE AS THE TWO CITIES IN THE NATION TO RECEIVE A GRANT TO STUDY HIGH SCHOOL REFORM. AFTER MEETING WITH SCHOOL SYSTEM REPRESENTATIVES AND UNIVERSITY FACULTY, I AM CONVINCED THAT WE MUST MAKE SOME CHANGES IN OUR SYSTEM. I AM ALSO CONVINCED THAT WE HAVE THE PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE LOCALLY TO DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PLANS AND PROGRAMS THAT WILL EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES WE FACE IN OUR SYSTEM. BUT THE EDUCATORS CANNOT DO IT ALONE. A GENUINE COMMITMENT FROM THE TOTAL COMMUNITY IS NECESSARY. WE MUST DEVELOP COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS THIS SERIOUS THREAT TO OUR SUCCESS IN K-12.

IN POST SECONDARY EDUCATION WE MUST DEVELOP A DIRECT COMMUNICATION BASE WITH K-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION. WE MUST ALSO HAVE THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT AND COMMITMENT BY LOCAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY TO WORK VERY CLOSELY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIFIC TRAINING FOR AVAILABLE POSITIONS WITHIN THOSE INDUSTRIES. POST SECONDARY EDUCATION MUST BE FLEXIBLE AND ACCOMODATING IN ITS APPROACH TO PREPARE STUDENTS IN TECHNICAL FIELDS.

IT MUST ALSO BE ACCOUNTABLE AND EFFECTIVE IN ITS WORK. THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO REASON WHY OUR SYSTEM CANNOT BE THE BEST IN THE STATE AND EVEN THE NATION. PERHAPS I AM TOO OPTIMISTIC, BUT I THINK IT'S TIME FOR US TO PREPARE FOR TOMORROW AND NOT GET BOGGED DOWN IN YESTERDAY.

HIGHER EDUCATION IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO OUR WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT EFFORT IN MANY WAYS. PROVIDING PROFESSIONALS FOR OUR BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY AS WELL AS THE RESOURCE BASE THAT EXISTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR OUR SUCCESS. THE TOTAL INTEGRATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY IS A NECESSITY FOR A GROWING AND DEVELOPING COMMUNITY. THE COLLEGES OF BUSINESS, EDUCATION, ENGINEERING AND OTHERS PROVIDE A VALUABLE RESOURCE TO OUR REGION.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE MARITIME AND AEROSPACE INDUSTRIES ARE CONTINUING TO EXPAND. AIRBUS ENGINEERING CENTER HAS OPENED AT BROOKLEY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX THAT WILL HOUSE 140 ENGINEERS. NORTHROP GRUMMAN/EADS WILL SUBMIT THEIR PROPOSAL THIS MONTH FOR THE AIR FORCE TANKER PROJECT. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WE HAVE THE BEST TEAM IN THE COMPETITION. EADS/CASA IS VYING FOR ARMY AND COAST GUARD CONTRACTS TO CONSTRUCT CARGO PLANES AT THE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT. MOBILE AEROSPACE WAS RECENTLY AWARDED A LARGE CONTRACT WITH FEDERAL EXPRESS AND CONTINUES TO EXPERIENCE GROWTH.

AUSTAL CONTINUES TO GROW ITS WORK FORCE AND PLANS TO EXPAND ITS BUSINESS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ATLANTIC MARINE IS ALSO EXPANDING ITS WORK FORCE AS WELL AS BENDER AND OTHER SHIPBUILDING AND REPAIR COMPANIES. BERG STEEL HAS ANNOUNCED THE OPENING OF ITS PLANT AT THE SITE THAT WAS ONCE INTERNATIONAL PAPER AND PLANS TO HIRE 150 EMPLOYEES. MOBILE AND THE STATE OF ALABAMA IS A FINALIST IN THE COMPETITION FOR A \$2.9 BILLION STEEL PLANT WITH 2,700 EMPLOYEES. THYSSEN-KRUPP, A GERMAN STEEL MAKER, WILL DECIDE WHERE TO LOCATE ITS PLANT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. OUR TEAM HAS WORKED EXTREMELY HARD AND I AM CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC. USA CANCER CENTER IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION. THERE ARE OTHER PLANNED EXPANSIONS AND PROSPECTS. WE MUST ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT THAT IS OCCURRING THROUGHOUT OUR COMMUNITY. THESE BUSINESSES ARE THE FOUNDATION OF OUR ECONOMIC BASE AND EXTREMELY VALUABLE TO OUR FUTURE GROWTH.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

IS ALSO A VITAL AREA THAT WE MUST BE AGGRESSIVE IN ADDRESSING. DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT IS PROCEEDING WITH THE OPENING OF THE RSA TOWER AND BATTLE HOUSE HOTEL IN THE NEXT 30 DAYS. THE TOTAL RENOVATION OF THE RIVERVIEW HOTEL AND THE LAFAYETTE PLAZA ARE NEARING COMPLETION. THE HAMPTON INN WILL BUILD A HOTEL ON ROYAL AND CONTI STREET. RETAIL, RESIDENTIAL AND THE ARTS COMMUNITY ARE CONTINUING TO EXPAND. OUR WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT IS PROGRESSING WITH THE SUCCESS OF THE CRUISE TERMINAL, CHOCTAW POINT CONTAINER TERMINAL AND THE MARITIME MUSEUM. THE C.S.X. BUILDING HAS BEEN TORN DOWN MAKING WAY FOR A NEW CONDO AND RETAIL DEVELOPMENT. THE CITY OF MOBILE WILL ISSUE A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TO DEVELOP A NEW MASTER PLAN FOR OUR CITY THIS MONTH.

THESE ARE EXCITING TIMES IN OUR CITY THAT REQUIRE ALL OF US TO THINK AND ACT ON OUR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN A TIMELY MANNER.

OUR SUCCESS TO THIS POINT CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO OUR ABILITY TO BUILD COALITIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS THAT CAUSED OUR COMMUNITY TO UNITE AROUND COMMON GOALS.

WE MUST CONTINUE TO RISE ABOVE ANY EFFORT TO DIVIDE OUR COMMUNITY. THE POLITICS AND PRACTICES OF THE PAST WOULD HAVE US BLAME ALL OF OUR CHALLENGES ON THE BAD FOLK. BUT IN A REAL SENSE, THE BAD FOLK HAVE BEEN THE MOST CONSISTENT ELEMENT OF OUR COMMUNITY. THEY HAVEN'T CHANGED. THEY HAVE BEEN THOROUGHLY BAD ALL OF THE TIME. THE REAL CHANGE IS THAT THE GOOD FOLK HAVE DECIDED TO REALLY DO GOOD. THE PSALMIST SAID "TRUST IN THE LORD AND DO GOOD; SO SHALT THOU DWELL IN THE LAND, AND VERILY THOU SHALT BE FED."

ALL TOO OFTEN WE AS MOBILIANS HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF OUR OWN POOR SELF IMAGE AND DOUBT. WE MUST APPROACH OUR FUTURE WITH A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND AN OPEN MIND. A CLOSED MIND SHRINKS THE SOUL, WITHERS AMBITION, HARDENS THE HEART, BINDS THE WILL, CHILLS FAITH AND DESTROYS HOPE. SIMON PETER THE APOSTLE SAID "HUMBLE YOURSELVES THEREFORE UNDER THE MIGHTY HAND OF GOD, THAT HE MAY EXALT YOU IN DUE TIME". I HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE AS MAYOR OF THE GREATEST CITY IN THIS COUNTRY. FOR THAT BLESSING, I THANK GOD AND EACH OF YOU. LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR.