

STATE OF THE CITY
MAYOR JOSEPH P. RILEY, JR.

JANUARY 24, 2012

Tonight I am pleased to report on the state of your city -- a city which has become even safer, more economically robust, busy with job creating activities, infrastructure improvements and a city that is increasingly recognized as nationally one of the very best.

Last year Charleston was named #1 Top American Travel Destination. We were ranked in the top 10 list of America's Best Shopping Streets, the #1 city for the biggest growth over the past decade in percentage of adults with college degrees, one of American's Best Performing Cities and much more.

These awards and recognitions are yours. They are the result of the work that you, the citizens of our community, do in making our city a beautiful, livable place -- one that is attractive to citizens and businesses moving here and a place where young people want to stay. But we, of course, must rest on no laurels. We have lots of work to do and 3 new fine councilmembers to work with -- Marvin Wagner, Keith Waring and Bill Moody.

We begin by making our city even safer. Under the leadership of Chief Greg Mullen and the fine police officers that make ours the best and largest police department in our state, the violent crime rate in the City of Charleston has experienced substantial reductions over the last 4

years. This pattern of declines continued in 2011 due to the hard work and dedication of the men and women of the Police Department and substantial engagement of neighborhood and business partners. We anticipate that when official FBI crime statistics are released later this year, we will see overall reductions reaching 55% since 2007.

While we have been successful at attacking crime, we still have a very dangerous element in our community that repeatedly causes fear and harm to our citizens. These repeat offenders, who regularly are out of jail on multiple bonds or who are serving probation sentences and continue to victimize our community, must be stopped. Our strategies of the last 4 years to strengthen our criminal justice system must continue. We have and will continue to work with the state legislators and community partners to target those repeat offenders who continue to commit violent crime while out of jail on bond or probation. There are currently several bills pending in the General Assembly. Ask your legislators to help.

Our Police Department also runs a variety of summer youth enrichment programs like Camp Hope, where young people mentored by the fine members of our Police Department have positive learning, role modeling experiences in the early evenings. These programs are offered in the peninsula as well as Johns Island and West of the Ashley.

Our Crime Prevention Unit is a very important resource for every neighborhood. If your neighborhood organization or you have not been in recent contact with the Crime Prevention Unit, call them at 769-7407 and a meeting will be set up to learn how you and your neighborhood can make your homes and businesses even more secure.

Our fine Fire Department graduated 33 new recruits with an additional 26 starting in November last year – the highest number in our city’s history. Highly competitive, there were over 600 applications for these positions. And the Fire Department has continued to make great progress under the leadership of Chief Thomas Carr. Chief Carr will be retiring this year. He is a national leader in the fire service, having received the Career Fire Chief of the Year by the International Association of Fire Chiefs. We will be forever grateful for his splendid service and leadership.

The city’s next fire station will be constructed at King and Heriot Streets. It also will be our largest. The station being centrally located can not only serve the adjacent neighborhoods, but quickly provide a back-up of support to all sections of our city. It will have 5 bays, 2 engine companies, the HAZMAT unit and administrative offices. This station has received a design award even before construction has begun, which will be in the spring.

Of great concern has been the fires suspected to have been set by an arsonist in one part of our city. Chief Carr and Chief Mullen are supervising an intense investigative process led by our Chief Fire Marshall, Chief Mike Julazadeh. Working with this team are not only members of the Police and Fire Department but our Sheriff’s Office, the State Law Enforcement Division, the Federal Tobacco and Firearms Office and the Secret Service. We are employing the best technology that is available and, of course, the most important technology is human -- what people see or hear. We have established a \$50,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the person or persons responsible. We are confident that we can do that, but we need everyone’s

help. If you have any information at all, please call the Arson Hotline, which is 1-800-92ARSON. We need to catch those responsible and get them behind bars for a long time.

Last Wednesday, January 18, I met with President Obama in the White House and urged funding for the Charleston Harbor Deepening as I did when we met last year. This project is so important to the present and future economy of this city and of our state. It is essential that our port and our harbor be deepened to 50 feet so that the newest ships that are being built in the world – those that can get through the soon to be widened Panama Canal – will be able to call on our bustling port. This will create jobs in the maritime industry in our community and bring economic development to our region in the form of exporters and distributors and will insure that Charleston will continue to be a worldwide maritime leader. Our port is the most cost-effective port on the southeastern coast to deepen. I will continue to work closely with Jim Newsome and the Ports Authority and members of our national legislative delegation and with President Obama to make sure that this important project moves forward.

Our community's new cruise passenger terminal will be under construction this year, giving Charleston a state of the art and handsome terminal to welcome ocean going visitors to this historic maritime community. The cruise business is a big job creator – both directly, that is, those with varied activities that happen when cruise ships come to port, but also the hotels and motels, shops and restaurants and service industry employees that benefit when these ships are in town. We are committed that this activity as other activities in the city always be in scale. The Ports Authority is committed to that as well with the agreed upon limit of 104 ships per year.

The new cruise terminal will then create probably the most significant redevelopment opportunity in our city's history with the redevelopment of the southern portion of Union Pier. This 35 acres of warehouses and the old cruise terminal will be transformed into a beautiful new part of our city with places for people to live, work and visit. It will allow for extension of public access along our water. We will be working closely with the South Carolina State Ports Authority and with the full engagement of the community to make this a reality.

Upper King Street, which is experiencing an amazing revitalization, will have a brand new business in the national headquarters of a computer software company, People Matter. Eventually 250 employees of this high tech company will be in a renovated historic building and a new building, which is further evidence of Charleston's growing place on our nation's high tech map. The CEO of this new company, Nate DaPore, has coined a new name for Charleston – Silicon Harbor.

The city renovated the former Channel 5 TV studio for its second flagship, or Flagship II, which is another high tech business incubator. In our 2 flagships we now have 29 high tech businesses and we continue to graduate companies from this incubator as these companies expand into other vibrant places in our community. And our Digital Corridor companies are growing – 38% of the companies doubled in size last year.

The construction industry is an important job generator in our community. We work very hard to help accelerate construction activity in our city. I am happy to report that 2011 was the

most robust year since the recession began. We have seen a steady increase in the construction of new homes, apartments and commercial facilities and much more on the way.

The Green Business Challenge is designed to help local businesses and organizations promote environmental stewardship and save money. This year the Green Business Challenge recognized businesses and organizations for their inspiring work. Over 450 new green initiatives were developed as a result of the Green Business Challenge. If your organization or business would like to join the Green Business Challenge, you may contact us at www.charlestongbc.com or go to the city's website and you will find a link to the Green Business Challenge. Join us. You will be doing something for the environment and save money too.

Construction of the Gaillard Center will begin this August. This will produce a world class performing arts facility, a beautifully renovated exhibit and meeting space, offices to serve the citizens of Charleston, and with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a beautiful new and redesigned green space on Calhoun Street. The Gaillard Center will be an economic boon. It will produce 390 permanent jobs, \$46.5 million of economic activity annually and have a positive impact on the city's budget. One-half of the cost of this beautifully renovated facility will be borne by the private sector and generous citizens in our community.

We have been working very closely with the Medical University and the South Carolina Research Authority to take wise advantage of the over \$200,000,000 of research activity that goes on at the Medical University of South Carolina every year, and help transfer that research, ideas, techniques, devices and drugs it helps identify and create to new jobs in our community

and to help make Charleston and our region a biotech and life science center in our country. The Horizon development will create space for new companies or expanded companies to locate near the Medical University as well as create new places for people to live and shop.

The continued amazing redevelopment of Upper King Street is about to see a major addition with the construction of the Midtown redevelopment. This will be an \$80,000,000 development at Spring and King Streets going south to where Cannon Street enters King, including restoration of the old C&S Bank Building. This development will include a hotel, meeting space, offices and retail space. Also, adjacent to Midtown at Meeting and Spring Streets, over 200 new apartments will be constructed valued at \$40,000,000.

The necessary reconstruction of the Septima Clark/Crosstown has begun, which will address the drainage challenges that this highway created when it was built and cut a swath through the peninsula over 45 years ago. This first phase of the construction was made possible by the city receiving a very competitive grant from the Federal Recovery and Reinvestment Program. As you can see, huge new drainage pipes are being installed underground, replacing tiny and disintegrated ones. You will see one street where that portion of the work is finished. This phase of construction will continue until May and then we will proceed with the next phase, which has been made possible by a joint city, state DOT and federal program for \$25,000,000. We have submitted a grant before the State Infrastructure Bank that we are very hopeful will be funded with city generating funds matching the State Infrastructure Bank funding, which will allow this project to continue in construction until completion. This very important infrastructure investment is a job creator as well and the process of construction will create over 1,100 jobs and

this state and federal highway being fixed will over the next 50 years have a \$2.4 billion impact on our economy.

We will also begin construction of the Market Street drainage improvement this year, proceed with the design of the Forest Acres drainage improvement West of the Ashley and, as each of these are completed, move on to the next with our commitment of the city fully addressing what are centuries-old drainage challenges in our community. These construction projects are job generators, too.

We work hard on the task of repairing our sidewalks. Over the past 2 years, over 31,000 square feet of sidewalks have been repaired. You see here a new innovative piece of equipment that allows sections of the sidewalk that have been pushed up by tree roots to be removed, the roots trimmed around the tree and the piece of the sidewalk put back carefully into place. This saves time and money and allows us to get even more sidewalk repairs under our belt every year.

Working with Charleston County Roadwise and the State Department of Transportation, we have seen great progress made on highway projects that citizens have helped us identify as being high priorities.

Glenn McConnell Parkway was widened from Charlie Hall Road to Paul Cantrell and the intersection of Magwood Road widened and improved as well, substantially easing the traffic congestion in that busy part of our city. The same is true at Wesley Drive and Folly Road, adding new sidewalks, additional turn lanes and new traffic signals. Bee and Courtenay Streets

drainage problems were addressed as well as the additional street and pedestrian improvements, and construction has begun on the widening of Bees Ferry Road which will include a new bike and pedestrian facility.

Our First Day Festival is a wonderful way to tell our school children how important their education is to all of us and celebrate the beginning of a new school year. Last year over 10,000 parents, grandparents and their children came to the festival to get free book bags, school supplies, visits to the Aquarium, harbor boat rides and saw lots of interesting displays, had lots of fun and enjoyed lunch. It is an important way of letting our children know we are behind them.

A necessary way to be able to have a happy and successful life is the ability to read. We have too many children and adults who cannot read or cannot read as well as they should. This is not a school issue. It is a community issue. I will work to create a Literacy Task Force with the purpose of developing a 4-year countywide community engagement plan to build a sustainable system of literacy for children and adults in our community and to promote literacy awareness. We will work with the schools, literacy organizations and anyone who wants to help. We need to put the issues of literacy in the forefront of the community agenda and get behind it.

The Charleston Promise Neighborhood has selected an executive Director, Sherrie Snipes-Williams, who with the hard-working board and an engaged community will create a national model of coordinated support systems to enable children from very poor neighborhoods to excel in school and graduate from college.

Another national model is the Meeting Street School, which will open in a brand new building this August.

And the Charleston Development Academy, in Gadsden Green Public Housing Project, has gained national recognition as well.

And our programs of tutoring, mentoring, reading, Lunch Buddies and more are enriching our children's lives. It does take a village – Charleston is leading the way.

What substantially shapes our cities are its parks and public spaces both large and small. This year we completed a large park, a beautiful new park, on Daniel Island -- Governors Park -- 40 acres with soccer fields and ball fields and more.

A smaller park acquisition, but extraordinarily significant, was purchasing 6.5 acres surrounding the centuries old Angel Oak. The acquisition of this land will protect the tree and its wooded surrounds and allow the parking that is currently near the tree to be moved away from the root system of the tree thereby enhancing its life.

A small portion of a long linear park is the new bridges constructed on the West Ashley Greenway. Culverts that once existed to support railroad tracks had long since washed away and the new bridges allow this 10-mile marvelous greenway to be fully used and provide remarkable vistas for our citizens.

Keep Charleston Beautiful was awarded first place in our nation for communities our size and we are pleased to be working with our County Parks and Recreation Commission on their plans for the preservation of McLeod Plantation and an exciting \$2,000,000 urban skate park to be located under the interchange of I-26 and US 17 adjacent to Meeting Street.

We proudly welcome residents of the former Town of James Island into the City of Charleston. Many have petitioned to join our city and have the benefit of our finest and largest municipal police department in South Carolina and being citizens of a city with a AAA credit rating. We had open house meetings at the Lowcountry Senior Citizens Center, which is in the City of Charleston on James Island. If you would like to join the City of Charleston, go to the city's website or give me a call at City Hall.

We are working hard in every section of our city to increase opportunities for safe bike and pedestrian access. In our new neighborhoods it is mandated as a part of our planning process. In the older parts of our community, we must work hard to retrofit our highways, our streets and our bridges. We have a special opportunity to cross the Ashley River by converting one of the lanes of traffic on the Legare Bridge, the northbound bridge, from vehicular to bike and pedestrian access. It is essential that we do this. This will connect the West Ashley Greenway and a series of growing bike and pedestrian facilities West of the Ashley with the network of bike and pedestrian opportunities in the peninsula and which system connects with the bike and pedestrian lane on the Arthur Ravenel Bridge. From the Battery to the beaches is an important and achievable goal. We are working very closely with Charleston County and the

Roadwise program and the South Carolina DOT to do everything we possibly can to speed the process of designing and then the construction of the Ashley Crossing which will be a game changer. It will be actively and safely used by countless citizens. And the West Ashley Greenway will connect with the bike and pedestrian facility that will be part of the completion of I-526, which completion is absolutely essential for the safety and livability of our community. I will do everything I can working with the State Department of Transportation, the State Infrastructure Bank and citizens of our community to have this project under construction as soon as possible. Right now, increasingly streets and highways -- Savannah Highway, Wesley Drive, St. Andrews Boulevard, Maybank Highway, Riverland Road and others – are used as cut thrus and thruways for which they were not designed for traffic going to Johns Island, Kiawah and Seabrook. I-526 completion is needed to alleviate that and to provide an additional evacuation route.

On the second Sunday of every month King Street is closed to vehicular traffic from Calhoun Street to Broad. It has been a huge success. If you haven't tried it, come out and enjoy it. It's a wonderful way to see and enjoy this amazing treasure of our region – a bustling and vibrant King Street.

The beautiful restoration of our historic City Market has so substantially enhanced this local treasure and now through the generosity of the internationally famous artist Jonathan Green we have lowcountry murals to frame this entrance.

Another huge success has been CARTA's free DASH trolley service. Ridership has almost tripled. The trolleys are outfitted with iPads providing riders with useful information about where they are and what is around them.

For a number of years scholars, historians and planners have been working on the concept of an International African American Museum in Charleston. The site that has been selected for the museum also is a location where the wharf that received most of the enslaved Africans who were brought to Charleston once stood. Arrival Square -- it is going to be named -- is a historic place in our community and in our country. We will be working very hard in the ensuing months as we begin the fundraising efforts to build the museum and a site that will be interesting and inspiring to people from all backgrounds.

As with almost every city when suburbanization began in Charleston essentially in the 1920's, the automobile created the opportunity for a new model of city building rather than a grid extension to drive out in the theretofore countryside and create residential opportunities. The result of this over time has been widened arteries and somewhat of a roughness in appearance on the edges of wonderful suburban neighborhoods. There is an opportunity for healing and reforestation of these areas. I propose to create a new community organization, working with the city, to seek to plant 10,000 trees in the suburban parts of our community. These trees will be planted along highways, shopping areas, streets and even parks. This is not something that will be done in a year and, of course, city building is a never-ending process. But I believe that we should be committed to the reforestation and beautification of the edges of our suburban neighborhoods.

There is a lot going on in our city and so much more I could report to you. This is an exciting and optimistic time in our beautiful city. You, the citizens of Charleston, have made it so. It is my promise to you and working with our fine City Council and city employees to work hard every day to keep making this the best place in America to live, work and raise our children.

Thank you and good night.