

## State of the City 2010

Good morning and welcome.

I would like to start off with my sincere thanks to our host, the Johns Creek Business Association and the Atlanta Athletic Club and to our sponsor, Emory Johns Creek Hospital.

I want also to thank the groups that helped get the word out to bring you all here this morning, the Johns Creek Chamber of Commerce, the Johns Creek Health Care Association, and the Johns Creek Community Association.

All these groups, working together are a tremendous part of what makes our City a real community — reaching out to each other, supporting each other, and bringing people together.

Thanks for all that you do.

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I am honored to stand before you this morning representing your City Council and our outstanding City staff.

Before I go any further I want to recognize my fellow council members.

Council Member Randall Johnson, Post 1

Council Member Dan McCabe, Post 2

Council Member Karen Richardson, Post 3

Council Member Ivan Figueroa, Post 4

Council Member Liz Hausmann, Post 5

And our Mayor Pro Tem Bev Miller, Post 6

And now, I would like to introduce the key individuals at City Hall who lead our staff so well in the day-to-day operations in Johns Creek.

I am so very grateful for and proud of our team.

City Manager, John Kachmar

Deputy City Manager and Program Director, Buzz Boehm

Fire Chief Joey Daniels

Police Chief Ed Densmore

Director of Finance, Monte Vavra

Director of Human Resources, Mary Ann Haskins

Special Projects Director, Grant Hickey

Director of Public Works, Ken Hildebrandt

Director of Community Development, Mike Williams

Communications Manager and PIO, Rosemary Taylor

And our outgoing Director of Communications, Bill Doughty

And it is my pleasure to introduce you to his replacement, Doug Nurse.

Finally, I would like to recognize the Mayor's office team—

Elizabeth Warren and Patty Hansen.

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Given what we have accomplished since our inception a little over three years ago, I think it is safe to say that we are now officially done with the startup of our city.

The first two years were consumed with setting up City operations, launching our fire and police departments, and sorting out and resolving questions over services with Fulton County.

While that task continues, the past year has been dedicated to building on our strong foundation. It has been a very busy year.

I will lead with what I believe is one of the finest accomplishments thus far, which is made all the more remarkable by the fact that we stood it up within our first 3 years of cityhood.

This past August, we launched CHATTCOM — or as you know it 911 emergency services.

As we all know too well, we had been living with an antiquated and understaffed Fulton County 911 system.

Under the leadership of John Kachmar in Johns Creek and John McDonough in Sandy Springs, we now have a new system that provides:

- state-of-the art communications and dispatch
  - highly trained staff
- and most importantly
- timely response to emergencies

So much so that in its first few months of operations we have improved our call processing and sped up the rollout of our vehicles which has improved our response time by almost two minutes. And you know every second counts in an emergency situation.

In its first five months of operations, CHATTCOMM received over 67,000 calls for service in Johns Creek.

That number alone tells you this is a needed service, and I know our Council is very proud to have been part of delivering it you.

The center averages about 500 calls per day — but here is a number that should also impress you.

Just a few weeks after the launch, on September 21 — the day of the floods — the center received 1,270 calls. Not one of them was dropped!

That should tell you the caliber of not only the system, but of the staff as well. When faced with a very early and true test of our capabilities, in a life-threatening disaster, we passed with flying colors.

2009 also saw the Johns Creek Fire Department enter into its first full-year of operations under the leadership of our Chief Joey Daniels.

The department responded to close to 2,000 calls for aid in 2009.

Our department battled 23 fires, 10 of them were serious residential blazes or as our Chief likes to say slobber knockers.

We would love it if we never had a fire in our city, but when we do, having this highly-trained group of firefighters saves both property and lives.

They run into buildings that the rest of us would run out of — and we should never forget that! 23 may not seem like a high number to us sitting here, but believe me, if it is your home or business, or when you are the rescue worker running in to fight it — just one is more than enough.

As you can see, the vast majority of our calls are EMS related — from health emergencies, to water rescue to motor vehicle

accidents and heart attacks, this department is trained and equipped for quick response.

How many of you know that heart attacks are a top killer of Americans today?

It is unfortunate that every 26 seconds some American has a heart attack.

What's more unfortunate, is that every 60 seconds someone dies from one.

When our department is called in for full Cardiac Arrest, it is a dramatic race against time.

The Fulton County resuscitation rate in these situations is only about 5 percent — one of the lowest in the country.

Our department, in the space of (1) year has tripled that rate — and we're not done yet!

Under the leadership of Chief Daniels, Johns Creek became the first official Heart Ready City in the state of Georgia.

What does that mean?

It means that we are building an army of people to help save lives.

To date, the department has trained over 500 individuals in CPR and in the use of Automatic Electronic Defibrillators.

Already in 2010 they have held training at Chattahoochee High School and even held a Super CPR Saturday the weekend before last.

Thanks very much to the hard work of our department and the generosity of the program's sponsors, Emory Johns Creek Hospital and the American Heart Association, we are making a real difference here in Johns Creek — and will continue to do so.

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Our police force launched in April, 2008 and this past year was also their first full year of operations.

On average, the city's sworn officers respond to 3,500 calls each month.

And I know how excited, or not, you are to see all those new police cars on the road. While most of you have probably not had the opportunity to have direct contact with our officers let me tell you, they are the absolute best.

Let's talk about why I believe we are better served today than under Fulton County:

*Motor vehicle accidents have been reduced by over 60% dropping from 400/month in 2007 to about 150/month in 2009.*

*And Traffic Deaths have also been reduced from a loss of 12 people in 2007 to only 3 in 2009. My hope is that we will be able to bring this number to zero.*

We have also had tremendous success improving on our own numbers in just one year—particularly in the area of car break ins and auto theft.

*Both have been reduced by 50%!*

This success is happening due to the focus and dedication of your JCPD.

These numbers should tell you that the city is a far safer place to live, work and raise a family than it was two years ago.

We are constantly striving for improvement and Johns Creek's finest are out there 24 by 7 protecting our businesses, our families and our property.

But the department's work extends far beyond responding to crime and traffic accidents. They spend a great deal of time proactively working to prevent those things from happening in the first place.

They have already launched several significant community programs.

**PACT (Police and Community Together)**—a neighborhood watch/education program for all residential neighborhoods in the city.

**SHIELD**—a business watch/education program which now has approximately 2,000 participating businesses.

**STOP**—a teen driver safety program coordinated with the Johns Creek Municipal Court designed to educate our young people on safe driving.

To date we have had over 400 teens complete the program and even had 95 guests — those are people who were not required to attend but came due to the program’s growing reputation.

This program has attracted national attention. In fact, the Memphis, Tennessee Police Department contacted our department to help them launch their own program.

The JCPD has one of the few **underage drinking diversion** programs in the state. Teens arrested for this offense have the opportunity to complete the program and have the arrest removed from their records.

This is a tremendous educational service for our youth and for our families. It allows the young offenders a chance to repair a mistake that would normally follow them around for many years and to learn about the dangers of alcohol abuse.

To date we have had 50 teens successfully complete this program.

**radKIDS**—an important education program for our youngest children that enhances their knowledge, skills, and power to protect themselves from violence and harm.

**COPS Connect**—This local e-newsletter, direct from your JCPD contains safety tips, scam alerts, local crime updates and much more that goes out to over 3,000 subscribers monthly.

## **Transportation/traffic**

To ensure that all those police cars, fire trucks and vehicles get to where they are going quicker, our Public Works Department has also been very busy this year.

Perhaps the biggest transportation news of year was a federal grant award of 572 thousand dollars that we will use to create an ITS - Intelligent Traffic System in Johns Creek.

It involves a series of video cameras that will monitor traffic and a fiber-optic network that will allow us to monitor intersections throughout the city at a Traffic Control Center at City Hall.

As conditions change – if traffic backs up, or if there is an accident – traffic engineers can remotely adjust the signal timing at various locations to keep vehicles moving.

We will use this grant money to design the master plan for the city, construct the Traffic Control Center, and install phase one of the system along Medlock Bridge Road. We'll also use some of the money to replace old inefficient traffic signal bulbs with energy-efficient LED versions.

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Earlier this year you may have read about some issues with bridges in our city. Our Fire Chief expressed concerns about whether they could safely handle our heavy equipment.

Our Public Works Department responded quickly. They made short-term adjustments to address the chief's immediate concerns. Then they did the inspections, analyzed the load ratings and provided their recommendations and cost estimates for the more permanent improvements that we will implement later this year.

Some other notable achievements for public works this year include:

Installation of our first major median beautification projects along Medlock Bridge and Jones Bridge roads.

The Kick off of the North Fulton Comprehensive Transportation Plan with our sister cities of Alpharetta, Roswell, Sandy Springs, Milton and Mountain Park.

We also fulfilled our promise of more green space by proceeding with construction on the Phase 1 of the Johns Creek Greenway.

And finally, we celebrated the department and its work during National Public Works Week with an event that included equipment displays, educational materials and programs for the public. We hope you can join us this year during the week of May 16<sup>th</sup> through the 22<sup>nd</sup> and meet the wonderful folks who put the “work” in public works for you.

## **Recreation and Parks**

When it comes to leisure pursuits, we are planning for the city’s future with completion of our first Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan along with a Cultural Arts Assessment. This plan, formulated largely by you, will be a blueprint for providing recreational and cultural opportunities for our residents for generations to come.

Participation in our programs is certainly strong, which tells me that you have a desire for more programs.

The three editions of our popular Movies in the Park series drew more than 43-hundred attendees and 3-thousand came out for our Fall Festival.

We had more than 300 children for our annual Easter Egg Hunt, and 150 more for our Santa holiday activities

Thousands of youngsters participated in youth baseball programs at both Ocee and Newtown Parks.

Our City Swim Team, with almost 80 participants in its second year, brought home 27 individual and 9 relay medals in the finals of the GRPA State Swim Meet.

And it wasn't just young people. There were 150 adult softball players in our fall league, and 12 teams in our tennis tournament. Our first city 5K road race drew almost 330 runners.

From a facilities standpoint, we were delighted to partner with the Newtown Community Foundation to renovate the Newtown Park Clubhouse. This complete makeover provides another beautiful space for group meetings and community activities. We also worked with the Foundation to build a new athletic storage facility at the park.

It's also a going to be a little easier to park at both Newtown and Ocee parks. We completed expansion of parking at Newtown and we're almost done with the work at Ocee.

The additional spaces at Ocee, along with more strategic scheduling of teeball, baseball and softball, should reduce the parking along Buice Road and help traffic move better throughout the area.

## **Community Development**

Along with keeping our citizens active we also focused on the look and feel of Johns Creek.

Our Community Development Department continued to refine the city's ordinances to reflect the vision for our community.

This past year, we revised our Development Regulations, which involved consolidating several city ordinances.

These changes allow for improved implementation and administration by our staff as well as a better understanding among engineers and the development community.

Also at the request of our business community, we revisited our sign ordinance, which some thought was too restrictive. So we worked with both our business owners and residents and found a better solution.

Again, the resulting changes balance the needs of our businesses for visibility and our residents' concerns over clutter. The final product better represents the vision of this community.

## **Web site**

One thing we have always prided ourselves as elected officials is maintaining an open dialogue with the community. One of the key

tools for communicating with you is the City's Web site – [www.JohnsCreekGA.gov](http://www.JohnsCreekGA.gov)

How many of you have been to our site lately?

If you have not yet had the opportunity to visit our new site, go visit it sometime soon.

This past year, our Communications Department completely overhauled the site, greatly adding to the amount of information available while also expanding your capability to do business with the city online.

The site also represents a major step forward in its architecture and ease of navigation, so users can find what they are looking for quickly and easily. Finally, we gave it an updated look as well.

We have received numerous compliments on the changes, but perhaps the highest praise came from the National Association of Government Webmasters, which recognized Johns Creek with its Member's Choice Award.

We also have seen a steady increase in the number of subscribers to our monthly "My Johns Creek" e-newsletter. We now have almost 11,000 people who keep up with city news electronically.

As I mentioned a few minutes ago, we also added another monthly electronic newsletter, Cops Connect.

You can subscribe to either – or both – publications on our Web site.

Of course, my goal is to have every resident and business in the city on our subscriber list, so I urge you to sign up and tell your friends and neighbors to do the same.

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## **The Year Ahead**

Last year I stood right here and talked about the rough road ahead. Our economy continues to face rocky times, affecting you, your business, and your government as well.

Despite the challenging economic times, shrinking property values and our shrinking revenue, we were able to hold the property tax rate again this year.

While that means that our \$55.6 million budget for 2009-2010 is slightly less than last year's budget, we don't think you will feel any reduction in service, thanks to some careful cuts and good cooperative negotiations with our partner, CH2M Hill.

A little more than 4 million of that budget is going to fund some much needed projects including:

Phase I of the Johns Creek greenway which will be completed in the next few months. I am looking forward to seeing you out on the trail soon.

Later this year, the city will be installing trail signage and amenities such as benches, water fountains, bike racks and landscaping on the new trails making them not only a more comfortable outdoor place for our residents, but more visually appealing as well.

As was noted earlier, bridge repairs will be completed in 2010. In addition, right-of-way acquisition for complete replacement of both the (Parsons Road Bridge over Johns Creek) and (Bell Road Bridge over Cauley Creek) will begin this year.

Intersection improvements will continue to move forward throughout the year.

Groundwork for improvements at Morton, Buice and Waters Roads along Jones Bridge will begin with right-of-way acquisition at those intersections.

An engineering study for improvements at Bell Road and Boles Road will be commissioned.

The Council is currently considering recommendations for 250 thousand dollars in sidewalk construction that will begin this summer.

Street resurfacing on Old Alabama (from Medlock Bridge Road to Jones Bridge Road) and Bell Road (from McGinnis Ferry Road to Boles Road) is scheduled to begin this summer.

And, as noted earlier, the implementation of the Traffic Control Center and Phase I of the intelligent traffic system along Medlock Bridge Road will be completed.

The budget also includes seed money for: Choose to Use Johns Creek, a buy-local campaign, and the Johns Creek Green Stamp programs.

And this year we will continue all the outstanding public safety programs I noted earlier, and launch a new one.

Just announced is the Johns Creek Citizens Police Academy which will launch later this month.

This nine-week course gives our residents an up-close look into how the JCPD does its job, how it's organized and what policies it follows in setting a high standard for community policing.

## **Council Retreat**

Last summer the Council and I met with senior staff for several days of very intensive work.

These discussions resulted in a clear and focused vision for 2010 and beyond, and I would like to share some of that with you.

## **Our Top Priorities for 2010**

Continue working with CH2M Hill to refine our partnership as we are always looking to operate more efficiently.

Obtain a bond rating to be ready to borrow money if approved by our voters

Set direction on how and what we will hold as community events and how we will partner with other organizations.

Build a Johns Creek Economic Development Strategy to focus on retaining and growing our existing businesses as well as seeking ways to attract new ones as well.

In that same area, we want to nurture more hotel business and even attract our first full-service hotel.

**We also included some high priorities:**

Investigating the feasibility of a city complex

Preparing for a possible transportation bond referendum

Looking at how to revitalize of our aging retail centers

Coming up with a Master Plan for future gateway markers as you enter the city

Looking at the potential for a town center

## **Wrap Up**

So I have told you a bit about what has been accomplished in the last year. I shared what the Council and I have agreed we would like to pursue for 2010. Now I would like to share my personal vision for our future.

And before I share these ideas, I want you to know that I intend to bring these to our council so that we can all discuss them and bring in your views as well.

## **Town Center**

When I imagine Johns Creek 5 to 10 years from now, I see a thriving Town Center that will offer our residents, businesses and visitors a variety of activities to choose from.

I envision a place that includes a town green where we can enjoy our beautiful weather together as well as an opportunity to attend an outdoor performance or even a movie under the stars.

In addition, what about the possibility of bringing our arts community together there by creating affordable space for them to rent?

And how neat would it be to have a versatile theatre right there that can be reconfigured to accommodate plays, symphony concerts, dance performances as well as be available for graduations, and community meetings?

And what about encouraging eclectic retail and restaurants to join in the mix and show how unique Johns Creek can be as well as potentially draw visitors from outside our city limits?

Please keep in mind, this is my vision and that our city council members have equally exciting ideas about what, someday, a Johns Creek town center may look like.

To me the possibilities are endless, but the benefits of bringing our community together in a vibrant town center are well worth trying to make it a reality.

I recognize that the Town Center is a dream just like our own City was just a few years ago — but hard work and careful planning make dreams a reality especially when groups of people pull together to support them. Will you join me in making this dream come true?

These improvements may come with a price tag, and each of you can let us know if it a town center is something you are willing to pay for.

## **Healthy City**

Next I want to see Johns Creek be a Healthier City.

We can all be part of laying the groundwork for that by adding to and improving our green space, greenways and bike lanes.

We have already been increasing our sidewalk space and greenway plans. I would like to see that continue so that eventually every citizen can get out and walk to shopping or ride a bike to the library. Or simply have a parent feel safe and comfortable allowing their child to walk to a friend's house, not only because we are a safe city, but because there are sidewalks, bike lanes and safe intersections to get you there.

From an economic development point of view, we are already a healthy and growing city. We need to take advantage of the success we have already achieved due in large part to our very own Emory Johns Creek Hospital.

When the hospital opened almost at the same time the city got started, it brought with it a tremendous amount of additional medical related businesses. These businesses have helped to keep Johns Creek healthy not only by helping our residents heal, but by also adding positively to our local economy.

I believe that we need to Choose to Use Johns Creek by embracing our hospital and do all we can to ensure its long-term success and all of the businesses that have come with it.

This past year Emory announced their intent to open a Winship Cancer Institute right here in Johns Creek. Unfortunately, this request was met with significant resistance by other hospitals outside of the city. They also know that cancer is a reality and I am convinced that having this asset within our community means our loved ones can get the best treatment right here at home. Please join me in support Emory's Johns Creek Winship Center.

## **Home to Major Events**

Speaking of our local economy, I want Johns Creek to continue to play host to major sporting events. These events draw visitors from all over the state and the world and help keep our local economy strong.

Thanks to the hard work and incredible facilities right here at the Atlanta Athletic Club, we will be the host city for the 2010 Atlanta Tennis Championship as well as the 2011 PGA Championship. We look forward to our continued partnership with the club and plan to host more of these events in the future.

## **Education**

I want to continue our incredible partnership with our public school system. Our Board Members, and importantly, our Area Superintendents, Principals and Teachers—are the finest we could ask for, and I am thankful, not only as an elected official but more importantly as a parent, for their service and dedication to our youth.

I'm sure you already know that we have the best public and private elementary, middle, and high schools in the state and I want us to have the best educational opportunities for our adults as well.

We are fortunate that Phoenix University is considering Johns Creek as their next location in Metro Atlanta and I look forward to

welcoming them soon and using this location as a foundation to building adult education offerings right here at home.

I want us to embrace the families in our community as well.

By promoting and supporting safe, family oriented places to enjoy together, we can complement the standard of excellence we are privileged to enjoy here.

By doing so, we will attract business that will be positive, family-centered gathering places like an upscale bowling alley, ice and roller skating rinks or even indoor athletic fields to name a few.

## **Transit**

Of course if we happen to get these businesses, it would be nice if we could actually get to them.

Therefore, I want to eliminate traffic congestion not only here in Johns Creek but throughout our region as well. Despite the current economic downturn, I see future growth here in North Fulton.

In order to deal with our traffic problems, I want a public transit option for our citizens and plan to start that conversation with our Council this year.

Public transit is not likely to be available if we do not plan for both the funding and land-use decisions that make it possible.

While transit is certainly a part of the overall solution to traffic congestion here in Johns Creek and beyond, we have to accept that cars remain a very important part of our lives.

And all these cars will require that we invest heavily in road improvements, maintenance and expansion to both catch up on years of neglect as well as stay ahead of the growth that is yet to come to our area.

And again, this will not come without a cost — you will need to let us know what your priorities are, how fast and how you want to pay for these needed improvements.

To that end, I want to continue our discussion about a possible bond referendum to provide an option to get these improvements done quickly.

## **Diversity**

Johns Creek is home to a number of different cultures as well as a wide variety of religious backgrounds. I want us to find ways to embrace our diversity and use it to truly understand more about each other. Not only will this understanding bring our community closer together, it will also increase the breadth of our cultural offerings.

## **Multi-Generational**

I believe that we can declare our city a success when we create the kind of city that is not only great for families, but also one that

supports aging in place and draws our kids back home to live here as adults. Don't you think it would be fantastic to not only raise our kids here, but to be able to stay and be near our grandkids as well?

## **Better Governance**

I see us achieve better governance through the creation of Milton County and the consolidation of the City of Atlanta with Fulton County. For far too long Atlanta and North Fulton have paid the price of an inefficient and bloated county government and deserve to pay less and get more from our tax dollars. I look forward to lively dialogue on this topic, but those who oppose fixing Fulton should not make us shy away from demanding that government listen to its citizens.

Finally, I see a community that recognizes how truly blessed we are to have achieved self governance.

I want our residents to continue to stay involved with, and even become even more involved in their government by attending our meetings, paying attention to what is being discussed and weighing into that discussion wherever possible.

After all the Council and I are merely representatives of your ideas and dreams. We are humbled and proud to serve you, but can only do it if we hear from you.

To me a vibrant, healthy, intelligent, connected and culturally diverse community is what makes Johns Creek the best city in Georgia.

In closing let me add that as I stand here, at the start of my second term as your Mayor, I am humbled and grateful to represent you as well as work beside the outstanding citizens that make up your city council.

I am often their spokesperson, but each and every one of these individuals deserves our thanks and our praise for the hard work that they do.

We each pledge to continue our work while keeping our promise of Transparency, Responsiveness and Fiscal Responsibility.

We move forward together — the City Council, the community, our businesses, and our staff.

Working together we are an unstoppable team.

We want to hear from you and we value your thoughts.

I want you to know that I am so proud to be your mayor — but my greatest source of pride comes more from being, like you, a citizen and a business owner in this great City of Johns Creek, Georgia.

Thank you and G-d Bless.

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