



OFFICE *of the* MAYOR

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Building a sense of optimism

Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings tells a story about asking a successful investor whether, in trading parlance, Dallas was a buy, a sell or a hold. It came to him as no surprise that the investor enthusiastically replied, "A buy".

Looking back at all that we have accomplished in the last six years and seeing what is happening all around the city I am not surprised that people say the same thing about Pensacola. When city residents were asked in the most recent Haas Center survey, "Is the city on the right track?", their answer was a resounding "yes".

The signs of success are all around us – the successful opening of the new downtown YMCA, our designation by *Where to Retire* magazine as a top retirement destination and our being home to one of the nation's top-rated high schools are just a few. That's impressive stuff, but it's the projects and possibilities on the horizon that give me a real sense of optimism for Pensacola. In the next two years the physical landscape of our city will be enhanced by a number of projects:

- The VT MAE Hangar at the Pensacola Airport will open for business and create over 400 jobs.
- Corinne Jones Park will be transformed into an innovative park and stormwater management facility, ensuring future generations will have access to a beautiful green space west of downtown.
- The Gulf Islands National Seashore Ferry project will provide people with an alternative means to travel between the City, Pensacola Beach and Fort Pickens
- Hundreds of blocks of city streets will be resurfaced.
- Fire Station #3 and Bayview Community Center will be replaced with new facilities.

- Planned private development throughout the city will add new office space, new businesses and new residences.

And there's so much more to be proud of.

We have so many reasons to be optimistic about Pensacola's future. Not complacently optimistic like a child waiting for presents. Our optimism is what economist Paul Romer calls conditional optimism, the feeling of a child who wants a treehouse and realizes that if he gets some wood and nails and persuades other kids to help him, he can build one.

So what's next?

We need to take our sense of optimism and put it to work on the things that will keep Pensacola on a positive trajectory.

In 2017 we will make sure that our voice is heard in Tallahassee and that our needs are addressed. There will also be opportunities to establish priorities and outline projects that can be funded from our area's share of the \$1.5 billion Triumph Gulf Coast Fund. Our priorities are projects that maximize economic value, projects that complement an existing asset or that complement a private sector development – projects like a downtown parking garage, repairs to Berth 6 at Port Pensacola and construction of additional flood mitigation measures.

We enter 2017 with the wind at our backs and the opportunity to expand on a number of positive trends and developments in our community. I am thankful for all of the citizens and businesses who have acted on their sense of optimism about Pensacola and stepped forward to invest in our shared future. Your positive attitude and your concrete actions are what have taken us this far.

Let's continue to work together to make this year safe, healthy, and prosperous for everyone in Pensacola.

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