



VIEWPOINT: Infrastructure Matters

Pensacola is experiencing an exciting period of growth. Housing starts are up, commercial property development is accelerating. There has been more than a 6% increase in business permits issued in the past year and permit revenue has once again exceeded forecasts.

I'm really proud of what we are accomplishing, but I'm also aware that many Pensacolians have real concerns about the state of the city's infrastructure.

The condition of that infrastructure greatly influences the economy's ability to function and grow. Commerce requires well-maintained roads, airports and reliable public energy services. Every city needs infrastructure improvements that have potential to pay off economically in private sector investment and job growth. Besides economic benefits, investments in new and improved infrastructure – things like better roads that provide access to well-designed and maintained parks and other public amenities – can improve residents' quality of life.

We will never allow the quality of our infrastructure to erode. That infrastructure – things like roads, natural gas lines, sidewalks, lights, parks and stormwater systems – is central to the well-being of Pensacola. Infrastructure matters. It matters in big and small ways. It matters to our economy, our quality of life, our safety. In short, it is the true foundation of our community. Investing in infrastructure isn't a project or temporary initiative; it is the platform on which to build the future success of our community.

Without regular maintenance roads can rapidly fall into disrepair. Left untended, defects can require full reconstruction at three times or more the cost. Streets in desperate need of repaving wreak havoc on a smooth commute and decrease the safety of our streets. The condition of our roads matters to our daily commutes and it forms the first

impression for many of our visitors.

City residents said in our 2016 community survey that the condition of our streets is one of their top concerns. We are responding with an ambitious plan to repave more than 1800 blocks over the next three years. This aggressive resurfacing program will increase the percentage of our streets rated in good repair to nearly 80%. In conjunction with resurfacing, 46 miles of aging natural gas lines serving nearly 3,500 homes and businesses will be replaced with corrosion-free polyethylene pipe. People living and traveling in all seven council districts will reap the benefits.

The first phase of the project is scheduled to begin in February and two subsequent phases are expected to continue until summer 2019. During that time we will be impacted by construction traffic, noise and dust. There will be periods when access to streets and sidewalks will be blocked and times when on street parking will be prohibited. We will do our best to minimize those disruptions and we will provide regular updates on the construction status through social media platforms, the local media and neighborhood outreach.

We know that many people will be inconvenienced during the construction and we appreciate everyone's understanding and patience as we work to maintain and improve our city infrastructure. As we repair our streets, we can improve road markings and handicap accessibility. When we are finished our neighborhoods will be served by new, corrosion-free natural gas lines and our roads will be better than ever.
