


Personal financial stability: one solution to crime



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Ask the Mayor

by Mayor John Peyton

As the end of my first term draws near, I can't help but reflect on all that I have experienced, accomplished and learned in my almost four years as mayor of this great city. One of my core beliefs – and it's stronger now than ever – is that great bureaucracies don't make great cities: great jobs do.

A high employment rate reduces poverty and homelessness, increases access to quality healthcare and

education and fights crime better and faster than any government program ever could. According to the 2005 Uniform Crime Report, a Justice Department survey administered by the FBI, increasing unemployment rates have historically coincided with increasing crime rates. In fact, cities ranked "safe" by the report are more likely to have lower unemployment rates, while joblessness is higher in cities the report ranked "dangerous." Jobs put money in the hands of people – and personal financial stability is one of the best solutions to many of Jacksonville's social issues, including crime. That is why I made it my goal to bring more, higher-wage jobs to Jacksonville.

Streamlining and re-organizing the Jacksonville Economic Development Commission (JEDC) was one of the first steps we took to help our city attract jobs. With a carefully-crafted new public investment policy and a renewed emphasis on investment return, Jacksonville

has made great economic strides. This past year, the JEDC facilitated projects that will create more than 3,300 jobs and inject \$446 million in new private capital investment into our economy. Simply put, every taxpayer dollar invested this year has leveraged nearly \$30 in private money. That is the kind of return on investment our taxpayers expect and deserve.

I've also made a commitment to the Blueprint for Prosperity, an initiative to raise per capita income. Blueprint identified ways to increase earnings and attract and retain high-income jobs to decrease racial and ethnic income gaps and address education, poverty, crime and other issues that affect our quality of life. To date, there are more than 170 partners implementing Blueprint strategies across Jacksonville.

While business expansion and relocation are important to our economy, growing local businesses is just as important, and we have worked hard to help small companies in Jacksonville

succeed. Small businesses are big employers. In fact, 96 percent of the employers in Duval County are small businesses! I'm proud that we've replaced an ineffective, restrictive city purchasing system with a forward-thinking, participatory small and emerging business initiative to encourage economic success in our city.

The Jacksonville Small and Emerging (JSEB) program is helping hundreds of local companies grow and flourish by providing financial assistance, educational opportunities and mentoring programs. The success of these companies will result in further employment opportunities for our citizens.

Because of our efforts to strengthen economic development, raise per capita income and grow small business, Jacksonville is emerging as a top market for job expansion and relocation. And providing job opportunities that put money in the pockets of our people is the best deterrent to crime and poverty.

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