

Mayor Jackson Speech – 7/21/14

Good afternoon.

Let me begin by saying that the shootings we have witnessed over the past week are totally unacceptable. Gun violence is senseless, it is meaningless, and on Friday night it left one man dead and another mother grieving.

Alderwomen Mary Osborne is standing next to me because many of the recent shooting have occurred in her district on the east side of Savannah. These are good neighborhoods, with decent, hard-working, law-abiding citizens.

Mary will speak in a moment, but I know that she is extremely concerned about her constituents who live in places like Live Oak, Eastside, Blackshear and Benjamin Van Clark.

They don't deserve to live in fear caused by a handful of kids too dumb to sort out their problems without a gun. I call them kids because the ones committing these crimes don't deserve to be called men.

While the most recent shootings occurred on the Eastside of Savannah, these crimes are unacceptable to all residents of Savannah no matter where they live. We are one city with one future and one message – and that is to put the guns down. We need to take a stand.

Our City Manager is working on ways to address the problem. She is expanding our youth development programs, to provide our young people alternatives to the street.

Our Youth Build program is helping teens who drop out of high school get their GED, and then teaches them construction skills so they can get a job.

Our Moses Jackson Advancement Center teaches teens on the westside how to run a real print shop, and how to cook from a real chef in a real commercial kitchen. These young people learn how to develop real business plans for their dream businesses.

We're planning to develop another SPLOST-funded family resource center in the Savannah Gardens neighborhood on the east side of town.

Our City Manager and Police Chief have made development of an Operation Ceasefire program a top priority for the Police Department. The initiative will use public and private resources to intervene in the lives of those most at-risk for committing a violent crime.

We will use churches, neighborhoods associations, police officers, and nonprofits to watch these risky residents like a hawk. We'll provide them all the training, counseling and opportunities they'll need to be productive citizens. But we'll hold them 100% accountable if they decide to break the law.

This will not be easy. But it's a model that has proven to work in other communities.

As a City Government, we can do more, and we will do more.

But as a community we need to demand more of ourselves and our neighbors. We need you as part of the solution.

Savannah is on the edge of greatness. The economy is starting to take off. Jobs are coming to town – and good-paying ones too. We are at the top of everyone's list across the world.

But we are shooting ourselves in the foot with gun violence. This is NOT just bad for Savannah. It's bad for every one of us. Because no one feels safe after a shooting, no matter where that shooting occurs. We all hurt.

And we all must be part of the solution.

To the Parents – get in your kids' business. Know where they are during the day and at night, and who they are hanging out with. Search their rooms. Love them, but hold them accountable. It is time for tough love.

To the Neighbors – get to know your precinct officers. If you see a crime, report it. We can protect your identity. Don't think that it is none

of your business. Crime is your business. Criminals look for streets where residents look the other way.

To the State and Federal lawmakers – we need you to toughen up our gun laws. We need you to partner with us. These are your residents too. It is much too easy to get a gun in our community. Those who want to put more guns on our streets are out of touch with the realities of crime today.

To Savannah, our home – We are better than this. No person with a gun is stronger than a community working together with a common purpose. We need your help. Together, we will make Savannah stronger.

Thank you for your time.