



**Office of the Mayor
City of Jacksonville
Alvin Brown**

**Address to City Council – 2012-13 Proposed Budget
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To the honorable members of our City Council, honored guests, fellow public servants and residents of our great city: Good morning.

Let me begin by thanking you for your dedicated leadership over the past year. And I want to welcome Mr. Bishop and Mr. Gulliford in their new roles as Council president and vice president.

Just one year ago, we met right here, in these Council Chambers, to embark on the most challenging public service mission any of us had been called to complete in quite some time. When we saw ourselves \$58 million in the red, we, as a city, did what we had to do to protect hard-working Jacksonville taxpayers.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm 100 percent committed to do this again.

After months of collecting ideas for budgetary reduction from our city employees, department heads and constitutional officers, my administration has eliminated \$68.7 million in general expenses for the upcoming budget year. This budget holds spending to \$945 million, the lowest amount since 2008. Once again, I have the honor of delivering a budget that my administration balanced without raising taxes or fees or tapping into city reserves.

Let me repeat that.

My administration balanced this budget without raising taxes. We are not increasing fees. And we are not tapping our reserves. I'm asking you to do the same.

In the past year we have all worked hard to take Jacksonville to the next level.

We're going to save \$20 million in taxpayer money over three years through our new contract with the FOP. And we can save \$4 million more if our new AFSCME contract is ratified.

Our work with state and federal legislators, policy makers and the business community landed a \$10 million TIGER grant for our ports to be more competitive.

We've gained more than \$7 million in funding commitments to benefit veterans, education, parks, Downtown revitalization and safer neighborhoods.

We've created meaningful partnerships like Learn2Earn and Leaders in Training to train a more dynamic workforce to conquer the challenges of the global economy. You'll see some of our students in the audience today.

These are just a few examples of what a dedicated city can do – even in a tough budget year. Together, we have stared down tremendous challenges to put Jacksonville first. And now it's time for us once again to step up to the plate.

The largest challenge in this coming budget year should come as no surprise.

We are obligated to spend more than \$150 million on pensions. That's an increase of more than \$46 million. It's double what we are spending on the Children's Commission, our seniors, our parks and our libraries – combined. There is no more discussion about financial challenges in our city. They are real and they are here.

To balance the budget, we must eliminate nearly 500 positions through attrition and layoffs. Every branch of government must do its part to streamline operations, eliminate duplication, reduce cost and do more.

I don't take downsizing lightly. City employees work hard every day to make Jacksonville a better place. I saw this first-hand in Jacksonville's neighborhoods while responding to tropical storms Beryl and Debby. I met face to face with more than 2,000 city employees during nearly two dozen town-hall-style meetings at our city parks. They have great ideas. They're motivated. They're talented.

That's why I'm saying, clearly and definitively, pension reform must be our city's goal. We must protect hardworking taxpayers and dedicated city employees with a fair, sustainable plan.

Jacksonville will not follow the path of Stockton California, Harrisburg Pennsylvania or Jefferson County Alabama. Jacksonville will not be part of America's failures.

We must be fair to taxpayers, the people who have built lives and families here, people who deserve a higher rate of return, increased opportunities and the confidence that our actions today are necessary for a better tomorrow so that their kids and grandkids have the greatest sense of hope and opportunity to remain right here, find great jobs, start companies and raise families of their own.

When I talk about taking Jacksonville to the next level, I'm focused on our future. I'm talking about restoring economic security to city government. I'm talking about promoting personal opportunity so that we can be a first-tier city of best practices and innovation, a city that generates good-paying, career-driven private sector jobs to compete in the global economy.

To reach the next level, we must reform our pension. This is not an option. We must work hard to build the most effective, efficient and accountable services. And we must continue to concentrate on public-private partnerships that are making a difference in the lives of people for little to no cost for our city.

Let me introduce you to Vicky Zelen, a small business owner who was my guest at the first Business Builder. That was a fantastic partnership my administration put together with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Vicky walked in with all the drive and energy to learn everything she could about how to expand her insurance business in these troubled times. It paid off. She met a gentleman there who wanted to redo his company's workman's compensation plan. It's now one of her biggest contracts.

As mayor, I'm going to continue to do everything I can to fight for small businesses and entrepreneurs who make up the heart, soul and strength of this community. We need to build a city where hard work is rewarded and everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

This budget is an opportunity to invest in jobs through the Office of Economic Development – an office we created together with the backing of the Florida Legislature and Gov. Rick Scott to attract even more high-wage jobs and make Jacksonville the most competitive city it can be.

Think for just a second if Winn-Dixie's corporate headquarters would have moved 900 high-paying jobs out of Jacksonville.

Think if Saft would have never come. Would we be building high-tech batteries in our city?

Or think if Medtronic decided to expand in Texas or Ohio – or anywhere but Jacksonville's Southside. Would we be pushing the envelope for medical technology like we are today?

We must continue to support the financial service businesses, medical science businesses, the technology sector and all those things that have proven they work well in Jacksonville.

We must continue to support our port and advocate for the international business that makes Jacksonville a global city.

And we must revitalize our Downtown. Our Downtown provides tremendous opportunity for business development.

By creating a Downtown Investment Authority we will intensify our prospects for economic growth by enticing good-paying jobs and world class entertainment to our urban center.

My administration has legislation for a Downtown Investment Authority on the table right now. We can get started on this immediately.

We can make Downtown a destination. We can let the private sector work for everyone in our city by increasing the value of our largest properties in an area where we have no need to build any new infrastructure.

We have momentum. We must keep moving. EverBank is moving 1,500 employees Downtown and hiring 200 more. We have new restaurants moving in and new cultural and entertainment events are popping up all the time.

We are one of just eight cities in the United States to win the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge – a major victory that means a consulting team valued at \$400,000 is going to help revitalize our Downtown at zero cost to taxpayers.

That's the power of public-private partnership.

My administration is focusing on innovative solutions to engage our priorities every single day.

I'm proud to have opened the first Office of Public Private Partnership. And taxpayers are getting a talented local executive to run that office for just \$1 a year.

We have to keep examining what works, what's effective and what leverages the most return from our tax dollars. It is also crucial for our economic future that we invest in City Hall's relationship with the military and veterans' community.

In the past year, we've made the right moves to elevate Military Affairs to the cabinet level to expand the department's mission. The military provides a \$12.2 billion annual economic impact to our city. The fleet at Mayport is growing – something that will bring hundreds of families to invest in our housing market and create new and needed opportunities for our ship repair businesses. And in November, Jacksonville will be on a global stage to host the Navy-Marine Corps Classic college basketball game at Mayport.

These are all great things but this relationship would not be possible if not for the one-on-one success stories few people get to see. We have two generations of veterans with us today.

Curtis Jackson is a 47-year-old Army veteran who struggled with the effects of a traumatic brain injury for nearly 25 years. He tried for years to get help, but found none until he came to City Hall just last year. After linking up with Veterans Service Officer Rafeal Santiago in our Military Affairs office, Mr. Jackson finally got the help he deserves.

Gayle Eanes is 24 and fresh out of the Navy. She's a Virginia native, but like many Navy vets, she's chosen to settle in Jacksonville. She's helping out in our military affairs office under a work study program paid for by the federal government. And while she's here, she's using our new Jobs for Veterans partnership to search for jobs to help her transition into civilian life here in Jacksonville.

We're becoming the most military friendly city in the world because of people just like this.

Before I wrap up I want to introduce Irvin and Ethel Leverock, sweethearts for more than 50 years who wouldn't dare miss one of our city's senior citizens events. I had the pleasure of meeting them at the Mayor's Walk for Senior Wellness in March.

When I put together my budget, I had folks like this on my mind. They built their lives here. They've paid the taxes for years that have provided our services and I thank them for that. People like the Leverocks are the reason we work long hours and make tough choices.

This budget is a call to do what's right for our city, its future and the more than 800,000 men, women and children who make Jacksonville one of the greatest cities in the world. The way we address today's challenges will determine tomorrow's success.

I thank each of you for your hard work and commitment to our city. I look forward to continuing the dialogue about solutions, new ideas and the specific concerns from your districts at any time. There are no problems too large when we're all working together.

Together, we can continue to make this city stronger.

We can focus on our port and business and empower the next generation of entrepreneurs and small business leaders to put Jacksonville back to work. We can revitalize Downtown and make our urban center a destination for people to live, work and play. We can build an education system that prepares the workforce of tomorrow.

Let's make sure that at the end of the day we're creating hope and opportunity with accountability and responsibility.

The responsibility to make sure that we balance the budget without raising taxes or fees or tapping into the city reserves.

The responsibility to live within our means.

The responsibility to restore economic security and promote personal opportunity throughout this city.

Together we can take this city to the next level. I look forward to working with you to do just that.

May God bless you and may God bless the great city of Jacksonville.