



# **City of East St. Louis**

## **2015 Transition Plan**

Dear Citizens and Friends of East St Louis,

Today we have a collective opportunity to make history. As you may recall, during my inaugural speech I spoke of my Administration's goal to establish our Governmental Platform based on three operating principles of Transparency, Accountability, and Implementation.

East St. Louis is committed to being transparent by engaging in open, two-way communication that provides accountability and full disclosure of its operations to its citizenry and stakeholders. We will remain accountable to those who are and will be invested in our City as employees, citizens, property and business owners, and stakeholders – and they will be accountable to us.

Our City Administration is committed to implementing our ideas by moving them from concept to reality by following through on our plans.

Our Administration's mission is to forge ahead by restructuring, rejuvenating, rebuilding and revitalizing the great City of East St. Louis.

Sincerely,

*Emeka Jackson-Hicks*

Emeka Jackson-Hicks  
Mayor of East St. Louis

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# BUDGET

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## **Provide a strategy for deficit elimination, cash accumulation, and contingency reserve for the long-term financial sustainability of East St. Louis**

**Why do this?** Our Administration “inherited” an unbalanced budget with a deficit projected at approximately \$5.7 million in 2016.

**How will we do this?** We will hire a qualified City Manager and experienced department directors to manage our City government. We will review the City’s organizational structure, including but not limited to: Public Safety (9-1-1 Dispatch Call Center); Regulatory Affairs (courts consolidation and code enforcement); Board of Elections; Public Works; and all recommendations on other long-term services. We will implement the processes and procedures recommended in financial audits for better accountability and transparency as it relates to record-keeping, accounting, and inventory control.

We will evaluate vendor contracts to determine whether they should be re-negotiated or terminated. Our Administration will engage in reasonable contract negotiations with Fire and Police unions to embrace a plan that adequately and fairly compensates the valued members of our Public Safety Department. We will determine what pension benefits are sustainable and affordable going forward and work toward a payment plan to address delinquent pension obligations with the Illinois Public Pension Fund Association Board.

Our Administration will follow the City’s Master Plan and ensure zoning is consistent and growth management measures are considered, which will prioritize funding needed for public infrastructure and public improvement initiatives.

We will adopt and enforce a *zero-tolerance* policy for City employees who engage in unethical and unlawful behavior. The misuse of City resources (time, materials and equipment) will not be tolerated. Waste, abuse, theft, and neglect of the City’s resources are inexcusable. Such behavior interferes with our ability to operate and function successfully as a City government; reflects poorly upon our residents and our City; and has a negative impact on employee morale.

**What will be different?** Our Administration will monitor and update our plans as necessary to ensure the financial stability of our City. We will continuously review budgets, revenue and expenditure trends, and implement audit recommendations in order to improve processes and procedures that will help ensure financial accountability within each department.

**100 Days:** The City’s organizational structure will be evaluated. The most feasible debt restructure and cash-flow management options will be identified.

**Year 1:** Our Administration will work with unions to determine which pension benefits are sustainable and affordable. We will work with vendors to re-negotiate contracts and when necessary, will terminate contracts that are redundant, wasteful, inadequate, or inconsistent with the market. We will restructure and manage services in the best way possible to retain citizens and attract new residents to the City. Emergency funding and oversight workout strategies will be utilized as a last resort.

# PUBLIC SAFETY

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## **Improve the delivery and quality of Public Safety to the Citizens of East St. Louis**

**Why do this?** The safety of our citizens is our highest priority. We will evaluate and improve the Police, Fire and Emergency Services based on implicit need. We are required by St. Clair County, State, and Federal agencies to provide adequate quality service with integrity, transparency, and accountability to our citizens. Based on the population and requirements of our City, we will assess budget, training, equipment, funding, and staffing levels. All are paramount to delivering quality services to our citizens.

**How will we do this?** Our Administration will collaborate with citizens, community groups, businesses, County, State, and Federal agencies to thoroughly evaluate the current state of our Public Safety structure, budget and delivery of services. The members of our Public Safety Department will be responsive, transparent, and accountable to our Administration and our citizens.

We will coordinate and involve the leaders of community groups, churches, and other nonprofit agencies in every neighborhood throughout the City to address the efficiency, accountability, and professionalism of our Public Safety services. Our Administration will perform public safety policy and staffing reviews of our Police, Fire, and City management services in order to hold our leaders responsible and accountable for their departments.

**What will be different?** It is paramount that we restore the credibility of our Police Department and address key budgetary issues. Our Administration will provide guidance and the support needed to facilitate improvements. Once improvements are made, our citizens and business community stakeholders will notice meaningful change. The perception of the Police Department, its processes, and its delivery of service will vastly improve.

**100 Days:** We have appointed a new Director of Public Safety to oversee the Police, Fire, and Emergency Services Departments. His role is to develop, implement, and enforce new performance and budgetary standards. We will employ a clear police rotation and schedule that controls overtime and budget overruns. Past overtime and budget overruns have cost our City nearly 85% of its operating budget. Implementing these controls will bring those costs in line with the City's budget, as well as enforce personnel accountability.

**Year 1:** A clear improvement of Public Safety delivery of service will lead to cost savings and improved fiscal health, which ultimately benefits our City.

# REGULATORY AFFAIRS

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## **Gradual Transformation: The Department of Regulatory Affairs' delivery of service will mirror similar departments in the region**

**Why do this?** The Department of Regulatory Affairs has maintained and operated in a reactive manner and has failed to consistently apply and enforce regulatory affairs codes across the City. This results in uncollected fees and loss of revenue to the City. As a result, the City's delivery of service is substantially subpar, as compared to peer cities within St. Clair County.

Our Administration intends to align the department's overall philosophy and its operations in order to collect appropriate fees, apply and enforce codes, and create a business-friendly environment.

The department's goal is to adopt consistent operational policies and processes and that are consistent with our peer communities. These policies will include fee collection, revenue enforcement, building standards, demolition requirements, and occupancy standards.

**How will we do this?** A thorough departmental audit will be performed to determine the efficiencies and inefficiencies that currently exist. We will review the "best practices" of Regulatory Affairs departments in communities where growth and development have occurred. Our examination of the department's revenues will determine where consistencies and improvements are needed. We will review our department's organizational to determine the best structure of the department and the resources needed for the City in order to compete with other regional cities.

**What will be different?** The Regulatory Affairs Department will gradually mirror the operational characteristics of similar departments in the region. Stricter standards will be established and department members, citizens, and business owners will be held accountable to those standards. Ultimately, operations will become consistent and more efficient.

Our Administration will integrate Regulatory Affairs into the Town Hall meeting agenda. Important information gathered at the neighborhood level will give citizens a venue where they may voice their opinions and concerns about the delivery of service.

The Regulatory Affairs Department will work closely with Precinct Committeemen to address regulatory affairs-related issues within their precincts.

**100 Days:** Our new Regulatory Affairs Director will provide a complete operational report on the current status of the department. We will take benchmarking trips to analyze the top three Regulatory Affairs Departments in the region, with the intent of implementing best practices.

Once we determine inconsistencies and deficiencies, as well as “un-captured or under-captured revenues,” we will restructure and implement the plan in order to provide service that is in parity with the region.

**Year 1:** We will implement a Code Enforcement Court to ensure business owners, homeowners, and rental occupants are in compliance with City ordinances. As a result, citizens will notice a cleaner and more attractive City.



# PUBLIC WORKS

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## **Evaluate and restructure the Public Works Department to improve the overall delivery of services to the citizens of East St. Louis**

**Why do this?** The Public Works Department is required to provide a consistent and adequate level of service to our citizens. In order for the City to compete for residential and commercial developments and growth opportunities, public works operations must be computerized, streamlined consistent, and comparable with surrounding municipalities.

**How will we do this?** We will conduct a Public Works audit to assess the current state of the Department's capabilities. Audit data will help us develop an improvement plan. We will analyze the best practices of other communities that share similar budget and population size to determine the best method to stabilize and create a more efficient department. We will seek additional funding from county, state, and federal programs in order to achieve our goals.

**What will be different?** Our Administration will identify areas of the City that have been chronically underserved and pursue resources to remedy problems related to flooding; overgrown weeds/grass; street cleaning, lighting, and signage; winterization and snow plowing; and all other critical city maintenance. Improved infrastructure will support our growth and prosperity. The Public Works Department will become more accountable to our citizens and our City's assets will be better protected.

**100 Days:** We will conduct a complete operational audit of the Public Works Department. As part of the audit, staff morale will also be assessed.

In addition, we will evaluate funding sources in order to complete projects and search for new funding sources. Our intent is to complete planned projects with new funding sources. We will integrate Public Works into the Town Hall meeting agenda to provide citizens with a platform to address the needs of their neighborhood. In addition, we will develop a phased implementation schedule that details when funds become available for projects.

**Year 1:** Our citizens will experience transparency and improved responsiveness from the Public Works Department.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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## **Create Regional, National and International credibility and progress in economic development**

**Why do this?** For too long, our City has failed to create a business-friendly environment. Lack of a clear vision and strategic plan for economic development and service provision has diminished our credibility. In addition, our capacity to build relationships regionally, nationally, and internationally is limited. Our Administration intends to rebuild the City's credibility in order to become the economic engine that it once was, decades ago.

**How will we do this?** We will examine our internal organizational capacity to create an attractive business-friendly environment for stakeholders interested in partnering with the City of East St. Louis. We will take specific measures to ensure the proper public safety environment is created and maintained in order to attract new business development.

We will establish regional, national and international relationships in order to grow best practices, as well as share information and resources that will help us prepare for new growth. We will examine all necessary options we have available to create an infrastructure that is ready to accommodate retail and residential business growth. The City will explore financing options and prepare for two consecutive clean audits in order to pursue a bond rating. The absence of a bond rating has hampered our economic development and growth for many years.

**What will be different?** As it pertains to economic development, the City will no longer operate in isolation within the St. Louis/Metro-East region. We will gradually increase our staff and resources in order to accommodate the workflow that will be generated as a result of new business development. The City will identify and aggressively pursue strategic business alliances and potential projects.

**100 Days:** We will enlist the regional business community as partners and mentors with the implicit purpose of ending many years of isolation, and start the process of becoming a true regional partner. As a result of a reorganization of our internal operations, new economic development opportunities will surface, for which we will compete.

Potential business partners and businesses that pursue business with the City will experience heightened commitment and professionalism from our leaders and staff. Our internal departments will work in concert, with the common goal of expanding economic development opportunities for our City.

**Year 1:** Our stakeholders will experience a business-friendly environment that attracts new business development opportunities, as a result of the successful internal efficiencies we garner from internal reorganization and the many improvements we've made to our City's services.

# NEIGHBORHOOD INVOLVEMENT

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## **Restore and create community pride and engagement through developing active neighborhood organizations with the establishment of The Office of Neighborhood Involvement**

**Why do this?** In previous years, the City has been somewhat unsuccessful in effectively engaging citizens at the neighborhood level. Outreach and assistance is needed in order to revitalize and develop neighborhood associations. The Office of Neighborhood Involvement is being established to promote services and help neighborhood associations find available funding resources. Our Administration's goal is to involve our citizens in the implementation of the City's small and large improvement projects. Community involvement encourages and supports ongoing revitalization efforts that benefit our neighborhoods and improve the quality of life for our residents.

**How will we do this?** The Office of Neighborhood Involvement will establish and oversee Neighborhood Associations throughout the City. The Office will serve as a resource guide to help Neighborhood Associations secure funding and resources to help them facilitate and implement programs within their neighborhoods, such as:

**Neighborhood Summit** – An annual forum to highlight citizen involvement in the community (The forum will consist of keynote speakers, workshops and an information fair)

**Neighborhood Leadership Academy** – An annual educational program to teach residents how the government City of East St. Louis functions and operates

**Neighborhood Improvement Program** – A program that awards competitive grants for small and large-scale projects to neighborhood associations

**Neighborhood Revitalization** – City Council-approved strategic plans to revitalize distressed neighborhoods through community partnerships

**What will be different?** Our Administration will be intentional in its engagement of citizens at the neighborhood level, creating a direct connection to City Hall. This connection will allow citizens the opportunity to voice their concerns and ideas. As a result, we will forge a relationship that is built on mutual respect and trust. Involving our citizens in our Administration's decision-making process, by way of Neighborhood Associations, will also create a sense of ownership and instill community pride.

**100 Days:** As part its reorganization, The Community Development Department will lead the effort in utilizing a Neighborhood Association Recognition Ordinance, which is a standardized recognition policy created for neighborhood and civic associations.

Their efforts will facilitate:

- Direct contact with Neighborhood Services and serve as a liaison to other City departments
- The issuance of City notices of planning applications for re-zoning, special permits, etc.
- Invitations to City activities, programs and community meetings
- Eligibility for funding and resource programs that improve our neighborhoods (i.e. Neighborhood Improvement Program)

**Year 1:** We will cultivate stronger working relationships with our county, state, and federal stakeholders to restore civic pride by creating an organized and unified voice to represent our citizens. Our citizens will become empowered to identify their communities' specific needs and proactively initiate positive change within their neighborhoods.

# YOUTH INITIATIVE

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## **Develop and implement initiatives and strategies to engage and foster the long-term development of our City of East St. Louis youth**

**Why do this?** Our Administration is committed to creating new and better opportunities for our youth. Statistics indicate a stark correlation between crimes committed and the ages of those who commit them. The greatest population of those who are victims and those who offend are within the ages of 18-25.

When we listen to, and include our youth in the decision-making process, we create better opportunities for them, such as job training, expanded educational programs, and academic and mentoring resources that will help them to succeed.

**How will we do this?** It is our Administration's goal is to engage our youth as we rebuild our City. Therefore, our Administration will establish a formal Youth Council and appoint a youth liaison to interact with the Mayor's staff. The purpose of the Council is to serve as a single voice for the youth in our City and to address trends and issues pertaining specifically to them (i.e. job training, youth resources, education, and employment opportunities).

Our Youth Council will develop and oversee the following programs and services:

**STEM Education** – The Council will establish partnerships with companies, nonprofit organizations, and higher-learning institutions to introduce STEM Education to East St. Louis youth. These workshops provide curriculum in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math, and will better prepare our youth for future career opportunities.

**Resource Bank** – The Council will serve as a resource that provides an up-to-date list of college and university scholarships that available to our area youth.

**Enhancement Workshops** – The Council will conduct enhancement workshops on Saturdays to compliment school curriculum. Staff will present topics that are not traditionally included in school curriculum, such as conflict resolution, character-building, integrity and ethics.

**Reverse Job Bank** – The Council will create a job database that allows youth to submit their resumes to businesses listed in the database. The bank will be a tool that allows our youth to access employment and internships opportunities at various companies and organizations located within the St. Louis/Metro-East region.

**What will be different?** Our Administration will be intentional in addressing the current disconnect that exists between our young people and City government. Additionally, our

Administration will provide platforms for leadership, allowing our young people to share ownership of our City's progress. Investing in these initiatives will also better prepare our youth for college and/or careers after high school.

**100 Days:** Our Administration will further discuss the process of integrating the concept and strategy of our Youth Development Initiatives, and we will integrate them into our Administration's Town Hall meeting agenda, in the future.

**Year 1:** The Youth Council will provide a strategic plan to implement these initiatives.