

MOVING OUR CITY “FORWARD FASTER.”

I. THE INTRODUCTION

A. Yesterday, I sat in on a meeting to discuss progress related to a construction project which is very important to our community. During the meeting, the construction management team and members of volunteer board of neighborhood leaders and stakeholders presented a “list” of uncompleted tasks and issues associated with slow decision making as the reasons why the project is both behind schedule and in danger of going over budget. Sadly, almost every item on the list should have been handled right here in City Hall. Well, I am here to today to serve notice that “those days are over in the City of Gary.” [Breath] As we move to develop the structure and the guiding principles of the Gary Department of Commerce, “we promise better government with a focus on service delivery and an action oriented culture. Our primary purpose in the areas of job creation and economic development will be to **move our city “forward faster.”**

B. “Forward Faster” In the coming weeks and months, our department’s senior

management team will develop a strategic plan which will focus on three key areas; **a new brand of accountability, seizing every opportunity to increase efficiency and cut cost, and promoting a “think local first” mentality as we lead the effort to develop more effective measures to deal with job creation and local business development.**

- I. **“Forward Faster”** I believe that accountability in government starts with providing a process that everyone can understand and a streamlined approach to problem solving. When a resident or business owner has a problem, I only want a maximum of two calls into the Department of Commerce, the appropriate department head and me! That is why, **starting with me**, Directors will be required to share their government issued email addresses and cellular phone numbers with the public and you will get a response in a timely fashion or **“I want to hear about it.”** If your problem requires 5 phone calls into 3 different agencies of this government, we will do all the running around and call you back with the solution to your problem.
- II. **“Forward Faster”** If we are to be the lead business agent for the City, we must always

remain focused on generating the greatest return on investment for the taxpayers **and that starts on the third floor of City Hall.**

We have already started the process of finding ways to cut the fat from our process and our budgets. Immediate benefits of right sizing our economic development apparatus will include the savings of time and money through singleness of purpose, shared resources, and, in some cases, folding two jobs into one.

“Like any good business, we promise a better product at a cheaper cost.”

III. “Forward Faster” “We plan to use the Gary Department of Commerce as a weapon to mount an all out assault on record unemployment and a stalled local business environment.” As we work to finalize a strategic plan for the agency, I plan to consult with community groups, local businesses, our corporate partners and members of the Gary Common Council on defining the concept of a “Think Local First” mentality when our development projects present an opportunity to hire a person for a job or a company to perform on a contract. Specifically, we should consider local resident hiring goals for all city funded projects, setting realistic local sub-contracting expectations, and a formalized

approach to creating mentor/protégé relationships across various industries all in an effort to jump start small businesses and to grow our local business capacity and commercial tax base. Last, negotiated community benefit packages on all large development projects will feature, local hiring events, on the job training opportunities for our residents and neighborhood level capital investments.

Conclusion:

Please, do not misunderstand me. Our future is bright and we are not starting from scratch. The art in this will be to take only the best ingredients from our existing economic development apparatus and streamline our approach to job creation and problem solving. **“In government, it is good to have a healthy amount of impatience”** The Gary Department of Commerce is about the business of moving our city, **“forward faster!”**