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MAYOR'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 2016

Dear Residents and Stakeholders:

When my administration created the vision statement that "East Orange would set the standard for urban excellence and become a destination city," many might have thought that we were too ambitious or lofty in our goals. After all, we had inherited a \$10 million deficit, a legacy of "too good to be true" budgets, and a full roster of stalled development projects. Additionally, our East Orange Golf Course was losing hundreds of thousands of dollars every year and our East Orange Water Commission was losing millions.

By facing these challenges head on from day one of my administration, our city's economic outlook today is a remarkably brighter one. A \$10 million deficit has turned into a projected \$10 million fund balance. Essentially, that means we can now focus on keeping our budget stable, our tax increases minimal and our doors open to make more investments in parks and green space, road improvements, arts and cultural programs, and other services vital to the livability and sustainability of our community.

The fruits of our labor are already paying off. In 2016, our golf course's revenue has doubled projected revenue and the newly-renovated course is quickly gaining a reputation as one of the premier golfing destinations in the region. For the Water Commission, we were able to cut taxpayer support for the Commission from \$2 million to none in less than three years. As water systems in other cities across the country are crumbling, we are making a substantial investment in our own infrastructure so that residents can continue to have access to clean and safe drinking water for generations to come.

In the six years before I took office, taxes went up by 36%. During my administration, taxes have gone up by less than 9% over the past three years. With a lower increase every single year and 2016's increase just under 1.5%, the city is experiencing a vastly improved level of services, including cleaner and safer streets, enhanced parks and recreation and expanded public programming. The bottom line is that we're serious about our budgets being tight and stabilized. The days of double digit tax increases are over.

Based on our diligence, private investors are re-energized and have pumped nearly \$350 million - more than triple the amount since 2014 - into redevelopment projects. We currently have over a dozen major construction developments underway, some that had been stalled for a decade or longer.

Eliminating our \$10M deficit is a huge win for East Orange and I cannot emphasize enough how much our success was hinged on my administration and the East Orange City Council working together to bring good government to the people of this city. As always, thank you for your continued support and trust.

Mayor Lester E. Taylor III