

## MIAMI GARDENS

# Miami Gardens will develop despite detractors, mayor says in address



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Mayor Oliver Gilbert delivers the 2016 state of the city address at Miami Gardens City Hall. He spoke of the city's moves to assert its governing authority and have greater say in its own economic development, and of plans to hire more police and efforts to bridge the gap between police and residents.

## Speech focused on city's coming development

The address was Gilbert's fourth as mayor; he seeks re-election in August

Hundreds of residents and officials gathered for the event

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In his fourth State of the City address, Miami Gardens Mayor Oliver Gilbert's message focused on the city's change from a series of scattered commu-

nities and neighborhoods in northern Miami-Dade County to a city that has a goal of developing and attracting business.

Much of Tuesday night's speech, outside Miami Gardens City Hall, centered on the city's moves to assert its governing

authority and have greater say in its own economic development.

Gilbert commented on the city's decision to move its \$60 million general obligation bond money from Wells Fargo last September after Miami Gardens sued that bank and three others over predatory lending practices in July 2014.

"Our thinking was simple: We will not fight you with our right hand while we feed you with our left," Gilbert said.

He also mentioned the city's latest move to obtain

building and zoning rights at the Miami Dolphins' stadium. Residents will vote on a city charter change Aug. 30 that would give the city and the county joint control over the stadium and surrounding property.

The Northwest 27th Avenue corridor that leads to the stadium will also see more new business in the next few years. Gilbert discussed the coming Wawa convenience store and plans to bring in stores like Marshalls and Burlington Coat Factory at the existing Carol Mart shop-

ping plaza, 18200 NW 27th Ave.

The city also plans to develop a multi-use performing arts and town center near City Hall, 18605 NW 27th Ave., to host events, concerts and plays.

"We are the third-largest city in the county and the largest predominately black city in the state. We need a city center," Gilbert said. "We need a place where we can shop, eat, entertain and recreate."

The address also touched on the city's plans to hire 10 new police offi-

cers by the end of year and on programs like Coffee with a Cop and the Peace in the Gardens festival that have tried to bridge the gap between police and the community.

"Children shouldn't grow up being afraid of police. They should grow up knowing they are partners with the police," Gilbert said.

And while homicides remain an issue in the city, with 18 in 2015 and five so far this year, there has been a reduction in violent crimes like aggravated assault and nonviolent crimes like burglary and larceny.

Gilbert said that reaching out to children from a young age is important. He also mentioned the city's partnerships with diversion programs as a way to give troubled kids another chance.

"Sometimes a hand up is better than a handcuff when it comes to providing for community safety," Gilbert said.

The city is also making progress on its general-obligation bond park projects. Gilbert said that all city parks will eventually have Wi-Fi and amenities for special-needs children.

"We will do it as right as we can as fast as we can but we will never sacrifice the success that comes from deliberate planning for the appearance of success that comes with a rushed ribbon cutting or a rushed groundbreaking," Gilbert said.

As Gilbert concluded his speech, he addressed critics of Miami Gardens and said they will ultimately be overshadowed by the city's accomplishments.

"They're going to be the subtext to a footnote of the greatness that is our story," Gilbert said.

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