



## PRESS RELEASE

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CITY COMMUNICATIONS

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**  
Alex Van Mecl, APR  
Roar Media  
[avanmecl@roarmedia.com](mailto:avanmecl@roarmedia.com)  
(323) 547-3631

### **City of Opa-locka Reveals New City Seal Design and Performs Ribbon-Cutting for New Commission Chamber at the 2023 State of the City Address**

*Mayor John H. Taylor, Jr. Focuses on a New, 'Bright' Direction for the City, Highlights 30%  
Reduction in Crime Since 2019 and Financial Progress*



(L to R: City Clerk Joanna Flores, Commissioner Veronica Williams, Commissioner Sherelean Bass, Mayor John H. Taylor, Jr., Vice Mayor Natasha Ervin, Commissioner Joseph Kelley, Interim City Manager Darvin Williams and Police Chief Scott Israel. Image Courtesy The City of Opa-locka)

**OPA-LOCKA, Fla.** - On the evening of Friday, January 27, The City of Opa-locka presented its annual 2023 State of the City Address from a newly minted commission chamber at their renamed Opa-locka Government Center, formerly the Municipal Complex, as well as revealed the city's new official seal, the first in decades.

Presented by former Vice Mayor and newly elected Mayor John H. Taylor, Jr., his first address touched on a city that has "improved drastically" and is "finally in recovery mode," noting recent improvements to the city's financial status, programs to reduce crime and an aggressive beautification agenda.



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On the city's financial emergency status, the mayor confirmed that although the city is still under state financial oversight, great progress has been made "because of the hardwork and dedication" of staff, which now includes the first finance director in five years, the first procurement officer in eight years, and a "plethora of senior accountants and accounts payable specialists, as well as financial and audit support."

"Our finance team has booked 17 million in surplus at the end of fiscal year 2022," added the mayor who went on to proclaim: "We finally have money in our reserve!"

Another area of focus in the address were the tremendous improvements in crime rates in Opa-locka, attributed to the leadership of Police Chief Scott Israel and his efforts to bolster morale and a focus on community policing and outreach. As a result, crime in Opa-locka has been reduced by 30% since 2019.

"We want a community where police are not feared but respected. And that's what our police department is doing here in the City of Opa-locka," Mayor Taylor went on to say.

Additionally, the city commission and interim City Manager Darvin Williams were instrumental in the negotiation and signing of the South Florida Police Benevolent Associations collective bargaining agreement, increasing pay for police officers for the first time in over a decade. Opa-locka police also received new vehicles and secured funding for a new police department to be located at the Opa-locka Government Center by the end of 2023.

On beautification, the mayor singled out the importance and value of maintaining a beautiful city, stating "we recognize it's not just on the businesses and community, but the city needs to do its part as well." Initiatives include the establishment of a multi-departmental Illegal Dumping Task Force, with installation of several cameras in dumping hotspots, as well as the city instituting a regular maintenance schedule to keep Opa-locka clean.

Other 2022 milestones included:

- Provided \$500.00 grants to relocate business vendors to the new Opa-locka Indoor Flea Market
- Bringing DERM into the city to provide workshops and resources for businesses

While highlighting the previous year's progress, Mayor Taylor gave a preview of significant projects that will be completed in 2023. Some of which include:

- Restoration of the Opa-locka Company Administration Building, a.k.a "historic city hall," a local and national registered historic landmark
- The installation of eight newly designed gateways welcoming all into the City of Opa-locka
- Digitization of city services, including the ability to open a permit online with the Building & Licensing Department
- Additional programming and resources for senior citizen and special needs communities from Miami-Dade County

The evening concluded with the unveiling of the City of Opa-locka's official government seal, symbolic of a new era for the city and a refreshed beacon of inspiration for progress, collaboration and innovation.



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Mayor Taylor enthusiastically stated: "We are all passengers on flight Opa-locka 1926, and we have made a connection with a control tower, we have been given clearance to take off. Our engine is strong, this is your captain speaking, and I'm saying 'fasten those seatbelts' and get ready to take off in this city like never before. Get ready to witness as we renew, as we rebirth, as we establish, and as we rebuild the normal standards and trust back into this community."

Opa-locka, he said, is "now to be known as the city of bright opportunities."

The seal's design features 28 blocks representing the original founding members of the city's charter, the architectural Moorish Revival wonder with its original colors, and an original "Opa-locka" typeface design that pays homage to the area's original ancient inhabitants, the Tequesta tribe of Opatishawockalocka, and was first recreated for promotional materials dating back to the city's founding.



Open to the public, the 2023 State of the City was joined by Opa-locka elected officials Vice Mayor Natasha Ervin and Commissioners Joseph L. Kelley, Dr. Sherelean Bass, Veronica Williams, and Interim City Manager Darvin Williams, community leaders and welcomed local dignitaries, including Miami-Dade County District 1 Commissioner Oliver Gibert and District 35 State Senator Shevrin Jones.

To watch the 2023 State of the City Address, please visit  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOPBb6tC9\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOPBb6tC9_Q).

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