



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media Contact: **Bethany Chamberlin** (330) 438-4301 Office
bethany.chamberlin@cantonohio.gov (330) 495-4181 Mobile

Mayor outlines path to revitalization in State of the City
Healy details success in crime, education, neighborhoods, and jobs in annual speech

CANTON, Ohio – In his third State of the City address as Mayor of Canton, Mayor William Healy stated that despite economic difficulties, the city is now better prepared than ever before for a prosperous future. Citing successes in the areas of crime, education, neighborhoods, and jobs, Healy declared that Canton has done more with less to move Canton forward while living within its means.

“We are facing extremely challenging economic conditions, but that has not deterred this administration from putting Canton on the path to total revitalization,” Healy said in his speech. “Our community is judged by the safety of our streets, the success of our education system, the strength of our neighborhoods, and the ability to attract and retain jobs. All four of these pillars are connected and depend on each other. And for the first time in over a decade, we have exciting activity in each of these areas.”

The Mayor described a number of trends and activities relating to crime, education, neighborhoods and jobs, including:

Crime

- A 30% drop in crime over the past two years.
- New programs in the “zero tolerance” approach including Canton’s Most Wanted, Nixle community alerts, the I-SPI camera program, the Enforcement Initiative Plan, and the Canton Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV).

Education

- Drastic increases in the graduation rates of Canton City Schools.
- Financial resources for Canton students to attend college through the Mayor’s Scholarship Program

Neighborhoods

- An aggressive demolition program that will see a record 200 dilapidated homes torn down.
- Plans currently pending in City Council to build a spray park at the Edward “Peel” Coleman Community Center

Jobs

- The city’s use of Project Labor Agreements to ensure local workers are used for public projects.
- A Smart Growth Initiative to provide jobs to Canton residents through programs like Jobs4US.

A full copy of the Mayor’s address is attached to this release and is available on the City of Canton Online Press Room at www.cantonohio.gov/pressroom.

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2010 State of the City
Mayor William J. Healy II
City of Canton, Ohio – April 28, 2010

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests. I'm honored to stand before you tonight in the Edward "Peel" Coleman Center to deliver the 2010 State of the City address.

Before I start my speech, I would like to recognize those elected officials in attendance. I would also like to thank my Cabinet and staff – both for joining me here this evening and for the hard work and long hours you put in to keep our city moving forward. I could not do this without you, and I appreciate your dedication to the people of the City of Canton.

Three years ago, when I ran for Mayor, I promised to revitalize our city. I took office in the shadow of the worst economic crisis our nation has faced since the Great Depression. Canton government was at its breaking point. On my first day in office, I learned that we had inherited a \$300,000 deficit in the Sanitation Department. Although we did inherit a general fund carryover, this carryover was depleted by covering departmental shortfalls, pay raises and contractual obligations committed to by the prior mayor and City Council.

Canton had been left battered and bruised in the wake of our national economic meltdown. Since day one of assuming the office of mayor, Canton City government and Canton families have made painful sacrifices to preserve the services our residence deserve while balancing our budget. In response to these challenges our administration has implemented policies to streamline Canton's government, which has allowed us to do more with less. Since the end of 2008, the City's annual spending has been cut by over \$8 million.

It started with the budget. Facing a shortfall of millions of dollars at the beginning of 2009, we kept the check book balanced by reducing city government. We cut city cars, we cut city cell phones, we cut travel, and we bought-out some of our most senior employees. It was hard work and it required the cooperation of all branches of government, but we lived within our means and continued to provide excellent services to all the people of Canton without raising taxes. Let me repeat -- we have not raised your taxes.

Even after these sacrifices, the Auditor reported that the city's financial situation had gotten worse. We would have to cut even more. So we did. We cut everywhere we could, including restructuring our fire department, police department, street workers, building maintenance crews, city mechanics, and civic-center staff to downsize city government.

All five of our city labor unions, all of our non-bargaining employees, all of our management employees, and all of our elected officials have been affected and have sacrificed in one way or another. These concessions have reduced our costs by millions of dollars, allowing us to live within our means in 2009 and 2010. I'd like to take a moment to thank all our workers, managers, and elected officials who have helped us do more with less. As a result of these efforts, the number of city employees has been reduced by 65, a 6.5% decline in our total

workforce since the beginning of last year. Also, overtime has been reduced by over \$1.2 million. These efforts represent real government reform.

Meanwhile we also used federal stimulus money to help fund city operations. Thanks to our stimulus team, led by Dan Moeglin and Scott Henry, we applied for any and all possible funding streams, and the City of Canton has benefited greatly. To date, we have brought directly into the city over \$13 million, and we have helped bring in nearly \$60 million overall into the Canton area.

These state and federal dollars have been used for programs including summer jobs, extra police, energy efficiency, and small business support, just to name a few. In fact, this year we will spend more on street paving than in any single year in recent memory. Thanks to state and federal funds, we will move forward on the repaving of Cleveland Avenue from 12th Street all the way up to 50th Street, we will be widening the Fulton Road interchange at Interstate 77 near the Hall of Fame, and work is being done on Rt. 62. And I am happy to say that right out front, Sherrick Road, which for decades has suffered from disrepair and neglect, will finally be repaired and repaved.

Despite our economic challenges, I am proud to report that Canton is on the path to total revitalization. Today, our city is better poised than ever before to help working families realize their dreams, to keep our streets safe from drugs and violent crime, and to attract living wage jobs. Hard working people who choose to live here can realize a return on their investment in this wonderful city. The future is bright for Canton.

So how did we get here? Decades of decay had left the city with major problems, including failing schools, deteriorating neighborhoods, and skyrocketing crime. The biggest challenge I faced upon taking office was reversing these trends, turning the city around, and helping businesses see that we are on the road to a brighter future.

Years of neglect and decay cannot be undone overnight. But we are making real and significant progress and the city now finds itself better prepared than ever before for a prosperous future. As I said before, I promised as mayor I would revitalize our city, and I am proud to report that we are delivering on this promise, putting Canton on the path to revitalization.

In order to revitalize Canton, we must address the four pillars of our community -- safety, education, neighborhoods and jobs. If we are serious about bringing jobs into our community and attracting families to live in our neighborhoods, we must begin by looking at the 1st pillar of revitalization, safety.

When I ran for office, crime was rampant in our community. Violent crime had been steadily rising every year for over a decade. 2007 saw record high levels of crime, gang activity, and prostitution. Drug dealers had literally taken over our streets. Our neighborhoods, schools, and business districts have all shown the wear and tear this criminal element has left on our community. To have any chance of turning around Canton, we must reduce crime and make Canton safer.

I promised a “zero tolerance” approach to crime and was criticized for this by many of my opponents. However, this get-tough attitude and policy has produced results. For the past two years, the Police Department has systematically gone after the most dangerous criminal elements to root out crime at its core, and we are seeing the results. Violent crime has dropped two years in a row, with an unprecedented overall decrease of over 30%. That’s almost one-third of the crime gone from our streets.

So how has this happened? First, we have received over \$1.4 million dollars in COPS stimulus funds to allow us to retain eight full-time officers for three years, that we otherwise would not have been able to afford. In addition, through the use of federal funding, we participated in the Northern Ohio Violent Crime Consortium (NOVCC) assigning our police officers to focus on gang surveillance, drug enforcement raids, illegal gun busts, highway-interdictions, nuisance bars, warrant sweeps, and patrol of vacant houses.

These programs played a major role in the crime reductions. However, our residents and neighborhood associations also played a role that cannot be ignored or underestimated. The members of our community who work every day to take back their neighborhoods are the first line of defense against criminal activity. We are working to strengthen the partnerships between neighborhood groups and the police department and introduce new ways for citizens to take an active role.

When it comes to crime, I want to make one thing perfectly clear. While we are pleased with the reductions we’ve seen so far, we are not claiming victory. Crime is still too high in Canton, and we will continue to fight everyday to make Canton an even safer community.

That is why this February we introduced several new programs aimed at increasing communication between the public and our police department. One of these programs has already resulted in the apprehension of some of our worst criminals, the Canton’s Most Wanted program. We post pictures and descriptions of the worst offenders online and on channels 11 and 15. Within 24 hours of this program’s launch, a tip from a resident resulted in the first arrest of one of our most wanted. Since then, four additional criminals have been caught with the help of this program. Canton’s Most Wanted sends an important message to criminals: we will not tolerate illegal behavior in our city, and we will not provide a safe haven for those who have broken the law.

Other initiatives include the Nixle, community notification program that uses text messages and email to notify and alert citizens of critical information in their neighborhood. We have also launched an online crime mapping system through www.crimereports.com for residents to review the criminal activity in their own neighborhoods.

Additionally, the I-SPI, or Invited Surveillance for Police Investigations, program is a voluntary program through which citizens and businesses can request temporary placement of surveillance cameras that will not only serve as a deterrent to crime, but also potentially catch criminals in the act.

Public safety is one of our most important responsibilities to the citizens and businesses of Canton. My platform of “zero tolerance” means that we will work endlessly to let would-be criminals know their activity is not welcome and will not be tolerated in our city.

Today, I’m announcing two more initiatives that our police department has kicked off this spring. The first is our Enforcement Initiative Plan. This is a six-month plan to target problem areas in the city through aggressive patrols. This program creates extra shifts during which officers will actively patrol targeted areas instead of waiting to respond to a specific call.

That’s not to say citizen input won’t be a key part of this program. Our residents know where crime occurs in their neighborhoods. Therefore, as part of the Enforcement Initiative Plan, officers will reach out to residents to help identify hot spots and direct patrols to where they are most needed. I’d like to take a moment to thank Police Chief Dean McKimm for his role in creating and funding this program with federal forfeiture funds.

During the spring and summer months, we know that gang activity increases and is one of the biggest concerns of our residents and safety forces. With that in mind and with the help of retired police Captain Bruce Allison, we have also launched the Canton Community Initiative to Reduce Violence, or CIRV Program. CIRV is designed to specifically combat gun violence with two main components.

First, we spread the message that violent and criminal gang activity will not be tolerated in Canton, and that we will use federal and state gang laws when charging suspects involved in crimes. This means that all members of a gang will be held accountable for the actions of any one member. If there is a shooting, not only will the individual who pulled the trigger be arrested, but all known members of that gang will be aggressively pursued and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, even those that were not directly involved.

The message is clear: if you continue to put our residents’ safety in jeopardy, we will come after you, and come after you hard.

The second component of the CIRV program offers help and resources to those gang members that might want out, hoping for a better life for themselves and their families. Through partnerships with other local service agencies, we will help former offenders do what they have to do, to get out of the gangs, get off drugs, get an education, and prepare for and find a job, leading them to a brighter future.

One of the surest ways to reduce crime in any community and provide for a more prosperous future is to have success in our education system, the 2nd pillar of revitalization. The longer kids stay in school, the more productive they will be as citizens. The more kids that graduate and go onto college, the stronger our entire community will become.

Canton City Schools have done a tremendous job over the last several years improving our students’ test scores and graduation rates. A graduation rate that was once hovering around 50% is now up to the mid 80% range. I’d like to congratulate our teachers and the administration at Canton City Schools for making these huge leaps forward for our entire community. If you

combine those numbers with the graduation rate from Plain Local Schools, where nearly 1/3 of our students attend, the City of Canton now has one of the highest graduation rates of any major city in Ohio.

But if we really want to put Canton on the map, we have to continue to improve those numbers. That is why I introduced the Mayor's Scholarship Program this past year. I want every child to graduate from high school and have access to the resources needed to attend college. No child or family in Canton should let their financial situation prevent them from achieving a college education. As of today, I'm proud to say we have over 100 students from the City of Canton who have applied to the Mayor's Scholarship Program. I'd like to thank those schools that have partnered with us to bring scholarship money into our community.

The more successful our kids are in school, the lower the crime will be in our community, and that makes our homes and neighborhoods more attractive for families. Which leads me to the 3rd pillar of revitalization, our neighborhoods.

Our city's greatest asset is the people who call Canton home. However, in many of our neighborhoods the deterioration of the past decade has been devastating. Dilapidated houses, high crime activity, poor performing schools, and limited job opportunities, along with the foreclosure epidemic that swept across our country, have made it nearly impossible to avoid the negative impact on our neighborhoods.

But there is hope. Again because of stimulus funds, millions of dollars have been awarded to help us with boarded up homes, foreclosed properties, Stark Metropolitan Housing renovations, and more. In the last few years we tore down an average of about 70 dilapidated homes each year. But this year we expect to demolish over 200 properties, double the amount we have ever experienced in a single year.

In addition to tearing down homes, we have also made significant investments in our neighborhood association's mini-grant program, so the people of our city can decide for themselves what the best solutions are to improve their own neighborhoods. We will increase our commitment to that program again this year, supporting our citizens and our neighborhood organizations at the grassroots level.

New strategies and partnerships have allowed us to continue moving the city forward, even during these troubled economic times. The Mahoning Road Corridor – Revitalization Project will move forward, thanks to our first ever joint agreement with private development partners on a public infrastructure project. This time, the J. R. Coleman Center and the Mahoning Road area neighborhoods and businesses are in the driver's seat. By partnering with these neighborhood organizations and businesses, Canton will see an \$18 million dollar infrastructure investment and the revitalization of Mahoning Road.

This administration is committed to continue offering support to this project by providing new economic development incentives, a zoning overlay district, and housing rehabilitation to the Mahoning Road area. This project and partnership will rebuild this neighborhood, create new jobs, and revitalize a major corridor leading into our downtown.

While standing here in the Edward “Peel” Coleman Center, I cannot express enough how important recreation is to our youth and our families. Again, there is a direct correlation to crime and recreation. If we can give our children a safe place to play, we will reduce criminal activities in our neighborhoods. That is why I am again asking Council to vote for the ordinance introduced by Councilwoman Chris Smith to use the State’s \$495,000 Capital Improvement Grant to upgrade the bathroom and shower facilities here in this building and add on a spray park for our children – right here in this neighborhood. We need to do something to revitalize this part of town, which has been neglected for far too long. And we need to do it now so we don’t lose our state funding.

The 4th pillar of revitalization is jobs, and I promised that creating and retaining jobs would be a priority for all of us at City Hall. That is why I am proud that Canton was the first major city in Ohio to enact a Project Labor Agreement for city government projects. This partnership with the local builders’ trade allows us to do everything in our power to put local contractors back to work. This program takes your precious tax dollars and hires local talent to rebuild our city’s infrastructure. It keeps your tax dollars in our community by creating jobs here in Canton. I’d like to take a moment to thank and remember, the late Councilmen Joe Carbenia, who worked closely with this administration by sponsoring and introducing this legislation in Council.

With the goal of creating local jobs, I’m also happy to announce a new Smart Growth Initiative. While annexation will continue to be a part of the city’s future, we must realize that it is not always the answer to development needs. We must find new and creative ways to partner with businesses and other government entities to create growth and opportunity, without putting additional burdens on the city’s infrastructure and safety forces.

The first component of our Smart Growth Initiative is the Jobs4US program. Designed with the help of Dan Moeglin and our annexation team, the Jobs4US program allows us to provide city water and sewer services outside of the corporation limits in exchange for a payment in lieu of taxes. This agreement presents no unfunded mandates for future generations and the fee structure is directly related to the number of Canton residents employed, creating a tangible incentive for businesses to hire Canton citizens.

We’ve already had our first partner with this program, Astoria Nursing Home, located in the Village of Myer’s Lake. We have come to an agreement with this company so they will receive Canton city water and sewer services in exchange for an annual fee. For every Canton resident they hire, they receive a credit toward this fee, creating a strong incentive for the 70 new jobs created to go to Canton residents.

As Canton looks to the future, we must continue to think creatively and open our minds to cooperative development agreements that create jobs. And, create jobs, we have. Despite the economic crisis, hundreds of new jobs were created in Canton this past year. We have partnered with the Chamber of Commerce, the Stark Development Board, private business, and countless other community partners to bring jobs to our city.

Just a couple weeks ago I helped cut the ribbon on the new Americal facility, which will create 170 new jobs right here in Canton. Medline, a nationally recognized player in the medical supply business is locating a brand new facility at the Mills Industrial Park, bringing at least 25 jobs to Canton, with the potential to create 55 or more in the upcoming years. Canton Center Mall has undergone a renaissance, creating a whole new shopping area, and bringing dozens of new jobs, revitalizing West Tusc into yet another Canton destination. If you haven't been there lately, I encourage you to go visit.

In the past year, we've seen the opening of the Gervasi Winery, which is one of the finest destinations in Stark County. The new Goodwill Campus has brought together over 15 agencies from across the region into one centrally located world-class facility. And the new Ralph Regula Federal Building is almost complete and will help transform government offices, revitalizing another part of downtown.

We want the business world to know that we are creating a one-stop shop for developers, and we are open for business. We have streamlined processes, cut government red tape, and rolled out the red carpet, assigning teams of experts to assist projects in any way possible to help them be completed on time and under budget.

Not only do we want to create jobs right now, but we must prepare to create jobs in the future by investing in our infrastructure today. One such example is our proposed project at the old Ford Motor Property. We have submitted an application to the Ohio Department of Development Job Ready Site Program for funding to do the site prep work necessary to create a 100 acre site, the second largest Ohio Department of Development Certified Site in Stark County. If we want to revitalize our job market and attract new manufacturing, we must take the steps necessary today that will benefit us in the future.

Another example of improving our infrastructure is the work being done by our new water superintendent, Tyler Converse, and his team. They have started a program of repairing and upgrading our water lines. In testing just 20% of our lines, leaks were found resulting in the loss of over 3 million gallons of water a day. That is enough water to supply the entire City of Alliance. Repairing those leaks has resulted in an estimated savings of \$150,000 in energy, chlorine, and fluoride, not to mention the \$1.1 million in otherwise lost revenue. We are working on completing similar testing and repairs on the rest of our water lines, and expect to have the entire system finished by the end of next year. Coupled with the recent upgrades to our water plants, Canton will be in a prime position to provide excellent water service at one of the lowest rates in Ohio for years to come.

As I have outlined this evening, we are facing extremely challenging economic conditions, but that has not deterred this administration from putting Canton on the path to total revitalization. Our community is judged by the safety of our streets, the success of our education system, the strength of our neighborhoods, and the ability to attract and retain jobs. All four of these pillars are connected and depend on each other. And for the first time in over a decade, we have exciting activity of revitalization in each of these areas.

We have continued to strengthen our infrastructure, we have seen two consecutive years of dropping crime for an overall 30% reduction, our schools have taken another step forward and increased their graduation rates, we are doing more than ever before to stop the decline of our neighborhoods, and we are starting to see the attraction of new businesses and new jobs for the first time in years. Even during these challenging times, the sun has been shining on Canton, Ohio, and our future is bright. As your Mayor, I will continue to work hard to make my campaign promises a reality: a revitalized Canton that we can all be proud of.