## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MAYOR’S LETTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CITY COUNCIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>POLICE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>FIRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>PUBLIC SAFETY &amp; TRAINING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>FINANCE &amp; RECORDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>PUBLIC WORKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>PARKS &amp; RECREATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GROW</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TO THE PEOPLE OF MERIDIAN

Meridian’s transformation is gathering speed. It’s spreading across the city, sparking new energy in our historic downtown and bringing security and vitality to our neighborhoods.

We feel it economically, too. Mississippi State University-Meridian and Meridian Community College are expanding programs to meet growing needs for talent. Meridian’s hotel market has boomed. People are visiting our city for work and pleasure. Many more will come when the Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Experience – THE MAX – opens in the coming months.

THE REBIRTH OF THE THREEFOOT BUILDING AS A COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT HOTEL WILL CAPITALIZE ON THE SURGE OF ACTIVITY DOWNTOWN AND ADD EVEN MORE MOMENTUM.

Our streetscape enhancement and flood remediation projects have prepared the heart of the city for the next step in the reinvigoration that the MSU Riley Center and other projects have begun.

My fellow citizens of Meridian, we are positioning ourselves for great things. We have worked together to turn our city around, to make it stronger and healthier and safer. We are nearing full staffing for our Police Department and Fire Department. We are repaving streets and sidewalks, upgrading streetlights, sprucing up our parks and green spaces. Thanks to our Parks & Recreation Department, new facilities like the Splash Pad and the upcoming Velma Young Community Center, as well as new sports and learning programs, are bringing wholesome activities to young people and new skills and interests to enhance the lives of adults.

The projects that flow from the $7.5 million bond issue that we approved last year will take us even further into a bright future. The sound fiscal practices and policies of our Finance & Records Department helped make that possible. Through the Community Development Department, we are continually adding new events to our already lively lineup of festivals and other celebrations, giving us an economic boost along with a whole lot of fun.

The Public Works Department is making the face of our city look brighter all the time, cleaning up abandoned vehicles and trash and clearing dilapidated, dangerous structures. And the Department of Public Safety & Training operates one of our lesser-known but strongest assets: the Meridian Public Safety Training Facility, which draws public- and private-sector personnel from across Mississippi and beyond.

Those of us who work for the citizens of Meridian in the City departments, in the Mayor’s office, and on the City Council feel proud to be part of such an exciting time in our city’s history. On behalf of all of us, thank you for the privilege of serving.

Percy Bland, III
Mayor of Meridian
City Council

**Dr. George M. Thomas - WARD 1**

New developments include the openings of new facilities for Berkley Southeast Insurance Group and the United Way of East Mississippi Volunteer Center, improvements at Brookdale Meridian, the move to new offices by the Community Foundation of East Mississippi, the opening of The Club 24 fitness center, and the growth of the new Free Clinic of Meridian. The success of the volunteer-driven Free Clinic demonstrates the community involvement that is carrying the city forward.

**Barbara Henson - WARD 3**

Last year brought new streetlights and newly paved streets to Ward 3 neighborhoods that have been in need for years. And what a joy it was to see happy children enjoying the Splash Pad in Highland Park. It will also be good to have the Dentzel Carousel building in pristine condition this summer, thanks to the Council’s approval of renovation and restoration. Meridian Community College and The Riley Foundation repurposed the old Walmart building on Highway 19 for workforce development courses. MCC embarked on a $6.2 million renovation to create a state-of-the-art workforce training center. It will be a showcase to prospective industry.

**K. Dustin Markham - WARD 2**

New developments in Ward 2 include the construction of the highly anticipated Walmart Neighborhood Market on Highway 39. It should bring 80 to 100 jobs to Meridian. The completion of the street construction at the Fairfield Inn & Suites and the groundbreaking for the new Tru by Hilton hotel highlight much-needed hotel rooms coming to the area. The under-construction Velma Young Community Center will help meet the educational and recreational needs of area youths and adults. The $2 million facility will host a variety of classes and programs and will be rentable for community events.

**Randy B. Hammon - WARD 5**

The excitement grows as the Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Experience continues construction in downtown Meridian. The $45 million project will showcase Mississippi’s legacy and honor Mississippi’s worldwide legends in arts and entertainment. Work on developing the historic Threefoot Building into a Courtyard by Marriott hotel should begin as soon as the Mississippi Department of Archives and History completes its permitting process. Other projects include the completion of the Fifth Street drainage project and the new Fifth Street improvement project scheduled for completion in 2017. New businesses include a Rush medical office building on 13th Street, a blood bank in the former Peavey building on Fourth Street, and the East Mississippi Oral & Facial Surgery center at 1903 23rd Avenue.

**Kim Houston - WARD 4**

As President of the City Council this year, I relished our continuing effort to improve the working relationship between the Council and the administration. We were able to get a lot accomplished. In Ward 4, we continued many successful initiatives. We revitalized James Chaney Park, engaging the community with the Annual Memorial Day in the Park Celebration and new playground equipment. We improved safety with sidewalks from Western Gardens and Highway 11/80 to Highway 19 and around most schools. We kept Ward 4 residents informed by hosting the Third Annual Community Gathering. We made our city brighter, and thus safer, with new LED lighting in the Southside community. We’re also working on bringing new lighting to other Ward 4 locations. Overall, we cleaned up Ward 4 by demolishing over 40 houses and moving forward on a project to bring in new, affordable brick homes.
Should government be run like a business? In many respects, it already is. The City of Meridian adheres to the same sound operational principles that govern any well-managed enterprise.

Of course being prudent stewards of taxpayer money ranks at the top of the priority list. Outside rating agencies and auditors confirm that our Finance & Records Department runs a tight ship. We’re making significant behind-the-scenes upgrades, improving software and moving toward electronic requisition/purchasing and electronic archiving/retrieval systems. That not only will allow us to keep an even closer eye on expenditures, but it will also improve transparency and public access to official records and other documents. We’re also continuing to focus on cross-training City employees to keep things running smoothly during vacations and other absences. Our business is, after all, serving the public.

Every good manager knows that you have to invest in your business. We’re doing that by moving to full staffing for our Police and Fire departments and adjusting our police pay policies to attract and keep top-quality public servants. We entrust them with the safety of our property and our loved ones; we need them to be the best. As for capital investments, the infrastructure improvements that we’re making throughout the city extend to our fire stations and to the vehicles and other tools that our first responders need to keep us protected.

One of our City’s "subsidiaries," the Meridian Public Safety Training Facility, continues to contribute significantly to our security and our economy. It builds on the expertise of our public safety employees, helps us attract and retain top-notch emergency personnel, brings outside dollars to our city, and strengthens our relationships with a wide variety of public- and private-sector partners.

A lot of unsung work goes into making everyday life in a city as smooth and as safe as possible. That’s our business. We work hard at it, and we pledge to do everything we can to only get better.
Taking care of business makes Meridian a great place to live.
Police

Protection is our job and our passion at the Meridian Police Department. It works two ways: We protect our officers so that they can protect the public. In 2016, we took several steps toward long-term protection for both.

We raised the starting salary for noncertified, entry-level police officers from $11.81 per hour to $15 per hour and adjusted pay upward for existing officers. We also modified our policy for so-called lateral transfers: officers who transfer to the Meridian Police Department from other agencies. Previously, we had hired them at entry level, regardless of experience. Now, we assign them to positions based on years of service and/or qualifications, thus making full use of their capabilities.

WHY DID WE MAKE THOSE CHANGES? TO KEEP THE CITIZENS OF MERIDIAN SECURE, WE WANT TO ATTRACT AND KEEP THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST.

We also want to give our personnel the equipment they need to do their jobs. In 2016, we purchased patrol rifles for officers. Nationally, we’ve seen an increase in the types of threats that call for such precision weapons as part of the response.

Body cameras, another new purchase, act as impartial electronic witnesses to protect the public and officers as well in case of complaints by citizens or questions about adherence to departmental policy. The cameras also can be effective investigative tools, allowing investigators to sort through the chaos of a crime situation frame by frame.
To counter the biggest dangers to citizen safety, our department reinstituted our Violent Crime Unit, creating a team of specially qualified investigators to work life-threatening violent crimes.

In a variety of ways, we strengthened our connections with the people we protect. In 2016 we opened two new sub stations, one in the North Hills Shopping Center and the other in Bonita Lakes Mall. We partnered with Mississippi State University and the Boys and Girls Club of East Mississippi to create Project Hope, a collaboration targeting criminal activity in the area of the club.

Our best crime-fighting assets are law-abiding citizens. That’s why we’ve assigned a Neighborhood Watch officer full-time to help existing Neighborhood Watch groups and establish new ones. Working together, we make our city safe.
Fire

What’s the most important tool for fighting fires? Firefighters. In 2016, the Meridian Fire Department graduated two training classes totaling 19 new firefighters. We hired two fire prevention specialists and a mechanic, bringing us to full staff in those areas.

We upgraded our equipment with everything from duty boots to two thermal imaging cameras and a rapid intervention (RIT) emergency breathing pack. Inspectors got Microsoft Surface computers and Fire Bridge software. We added three staff vehicles.

AT OUR STATIONS, WE FIXED GUTTERS AND INSTALLED ENERGY-EFFICIENT RADIANT HEATERS AND AN ENGINE BAY OVERHEAD DOOR WITH A PEDESTRIAN WALK-THROUGH AT STATION 1; PURCHASED LAND FOR STATION 2; REPLACED ALL GUTTERS AT STATION 4; REPAIRED AN EXTERIOR WALL AND COMPLETED AN ENGINE BAY ROOF PROJECT AT STATION 7; AND REPLACED ALL MATTRESSES DEPARTMENT-WIDE.

In 2017, we hope to build Station 2, add three thermal imaging cameras so we can have one on each truck, add another RIT pack, determine whether we need a thermal imaging camera in each captain’s breathing apparatus mask, and add belts to our “boot program.”

We’ll buy a “quint” (quintuple combination pumper vehicle, featuring pump, water tank, hose, aerial device, and ground ladder capability) with a state-of-the-art 107-foot ladder. We’ll start the process of replacing Engine 3.

A new training class of 10 firefighters should allow us to fully staff the Suppression Division and cut overtime costs. Filling vacancies for a training captain and instructor will help us maintain our reputation for having some of the state’s best training. We will initiate electronic in-service training and finish implementing the Civil Service testing procedures at Meridian Community College that we pushed for last year.

For better coverage, we plan to create two new City fire districts. If public interest continues to be strong, we’ll add a second week of our Camp Fire Academy, the summer day camp that teaches children what we do and how to keep themselves and their families safe. We’ll enhance our distribution of detectors for smoke and carbon monoxide among the elderly and those in need. Above all, we’ll continue to protect.
The Department of Public Safety & Training expanded its scope in 2016 by offering CPR training to the City’s Finance & Records Department. We had previously confined our CPR training to emergency responders. Feedback was so positive and demand from other departments has been so great that we are planning CPR classes for other City employees.

**OUR DEPARTMENT SERVES MERIDIAN’S RESIDENTS BEHIND THE SCENES, PROVIDING ESSENTIAL TRAINING TO THOSE WHO DO INTERACT WITH THE PUBLIC.**

In 2016 we conducted two basic firefighter classes at the Meridian Public Safety Training Facility that produced 23 new City firefighters. We also partnered with the Mississippi Constables Association to provide two weeks of law enforcement training to 37 elected constables.

We continued to provide National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) training to emergency responders throughout the state. In 2016, we offered Advanced Search and Rescue (ADSAR) and Fundamentals of Search and Rescue (FUNSAR) classes and SARTECH II evaluation. And we once again hosted the renowned Carlos Hathcock Sniper School.

We stay on the cutting edge of techniques and technology. When lives are at stake, we need the best tools available. We hosted a Virtual Search Planning Class by Paul Burke of Nevada, creator of the virtual search planning process that has dramatically improved search outcomes for lost and missing persons. And with Mississippi Department of Homeland Security funding, we hosted our first ever Unmanned Aircraft System Pilot in Command class for drone pilots.

The 24-hour class certified 14 emergency responders to operate drones for search and rescue, damage assessment, and other emergency functions.

Here are other agencies and private companies that received emergency-responder training at the Public Safety Training Facility:

- Meridian Community College
- Lauderdale County Sheriff’s Department
- Lauderdale County Volunteer Fire Services
- Mississippi Department of Corrections
- Mississippi Department of Transportation
- Mississippi Office of Homeland Security
- Mississippi State Department of Health
- Mississippi State Fire Academy
- Mississippi Search and Rescue Association
- Mississippi Search and Rescue Task Force
- Air National Guard 238th Air Support Operations Squadron
- Naval Air Station Meridian
- Advance Technical and Educational Consultants
- East Mississippi Correctional Facility
- Modern Outfitters
- S.E.R.T.
FINANCE & RECORDS
For the 20th consecutive year, we received a Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. The City also received an unmodified financial opinion for its most recent comprehensive annual financial report and maintained its excellent bond ratings of Aa3 from Moody's Investors Service and A+ from Standard & Poor's.

**In Plain English, That Means that Our Peers, Outside Financial Auditors, and Independent Rating Agencies All Agree That the Finance & Records Department Takes Good Care of Our Citizens' Money.**

We keep trying to do an even better job of it. For example, this year we implemented the City's first vehicle lease-purchase plan, allowing us to modernize our vehicle fleet, increase efficiency, and reduce maintenance costs. We moved the City's central depository account to Citizens National Bank, a local institution that offered reduced fees. We upgraded email and credit card processing software and helped select new 911 software.

We cross-trained in the Utility Billing Department to maintain service during vacations and other worker absences and to save time and money by teaching meter readers to install and maintain radio transmitters on meters. New handheld devices make reading and keeping track of utility meters easier and more efficient.

Our department also planned and conducted the special election in August in which voters approved the prepared food and beverage tax.

To ensure accuracy and minimize lost revenue, we'll continue our program of replacing the oldest utility meters with new models. We plan to create programs for meter box maintenance and inspections of other City equipment. We'll continue to cross-train employees to cover for others during absences in order to give residents the service they deserve.

Our most ambitious plans involve bringing City Hall into the digital age with an electronic requisition and purchasing system and an electronic archiving and retrieval system for documents and records. City records, including City Council orders and resolutions, are currently on paper and have to be manually filed and retrieved. Switching to electronic records will save on storage costs and make records much more accessible to all. The referendum resulted in 68.2% of Meridian citizens approving the prepared food and beverage tax to fund the Meridian Arts & Entertainment Experience.
2016 GENERAL FUND DEPARTMENT EXPENDITURES
For fiscal year ending September 30, 2016

- FIRE
- EXECUTIVE, LEGISLATIVE & JUDICIAL
- POLICE
- PUBLIC WORKS
- PARKS & RECREATION
- FINANCE & RECORDS
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

$2,267,745
$3,422,195
$3,094,577
$3,183,834
$4,977,267
$8,475,168
$8,077,294
2016 Use of Funds

- OTHER $620,103
- TRANSFERS & OTHER CHARGES $1,535,462
- CAPITAL OUTLAY $3,148,356
- HEALTH & LIFE INSURANCE CLAIMS $3,611,669
- DEBT SERVICE $4,830,081
- SUPPLIES 13,655,062
- PAYROLL $25,078,039

2016 Funds From All Sources

- GENERAL GOVERNMENT $402,350
- PUBLIC WORKS $514,832
- CULTURE & RECREATION $898,765
- OTHER $1,310,585
- PUBLIC SAFETY $1,602,473
- WASTE COLLECTION & DISPOSAL $1,867,543
- FRANCHISE TAXES $2,554,711
- SALES TAX $14,431,185
- PROPERTY TAX $14,948,429
- WATER & SEWER $15,740,482
Meridian’s departments of Community Development, Public Works, and Parks & Recreation carry out widely disparate missions, but they share one big thing in common: They foster pride in our city.

Longtime residents who remember the days when downtown bustled smile as spruced-up streetscapes and increasing numbers of festivals, concerts, and other events help spark renewed energy in the historic heart of the city. Newcomers marvel at all the things there are to do and appreciate the city’s forward-looking efforts to increase energy efficiency and keep its infrastructure in top condition.

And kids? Their shrieks of laughter convey their approval as they play in the parks, romp at the outdoor events, and compete gleefully in sports. They don’t realize it, but they’re making their own proud memories that they’ll pass along to their children and grandchildren.

Does a packed and diverse schedule of concerts and festivals really make that much of a difference? Do recreational opportunities, lifelong-learning activities, and avenues for personal expression through the arts really change anything? Do continuing programs of removing eyesores, planting trees, and making streets and sidewalks nicer really give attitudes a boost?

You bet they do. The arts enrich lives and can lead to rewarding careers. Brightening the face of our city and providing residents with opportunities to come together to share interests and activities make us all feel better. Encouraging our hardworking teachers and supporting individuals who want to improve their physical health and well-being inspire us all to reach for our own betterment goals.

A city needs sturdy, dependable infrastructure, such as our continually improving water and wastewater treatment plants. It also needs beauty and joy. We do our best to enhance what you love about Meridian, Mississippi. It’s our city, too. We want to make you, and it, proud.
Enriching daily lives helps make our city proud.
Two major downtown development projects will continue to strengthen Meridian’s economy, with ripple effects spreading far beyond the heart of the city. Construction proceeds on the Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Experience, which is on track to open next year. Preliminary work has begun to transform the Threefoot Building into a Courtyard by Marriott hotel.

THOSE PROJECTS WILL DRAW THOUSANDS OF VISITORS EVERY WEEK, ACTING AS CATALYSTS FOR RESTAURANTS, SHOPS, AND OTHER NEW BUSINESSES.

Developments bringing economic growth to other parts of the city include the Walmart Neighborhood Market on Highway 39, the Newk’s Eatery near Bonita Lakes, and the soon-to-open Velma Young Community Center at Magnolia Park.

Here’s a snapshot of the year’s activities by various Community Development divisions:

• **Cultural Affairs**: The division helped coordinate nearly 300 events in 2016. It took on responsibility for Meridian Main Street events, including the Earth’s Bounty Festival, which drew crowds downtown to shop for fresh fruits and vegetables and homemade products on the first Saturday of each month from April through November. Cultural Affairs also added new events, such as the popular Meridian Mardi Gras and Merry Meridian Market.

• **Union Station Multi-Modal Transportation Center**: More than 150 meetings, weddings, luncheons, and other events included the KCS Holiday Express train, which drew more than 4,000 visitors.
• **Code Enforcement**: The division continued to target dilapidated structures, abandoned vehicles, and rubbish piles. It issued 434 notices of violations. Of the 40 citations that resulted in Environmental Court cases, 36 were resolved. The division condemned 42 structures and set 30 structures for demolition.

• **Planning**: A downtown block party for local business owners celebrated completion of the $3.5 million downtown drainage project. Planners continued implementing a pedestrian project to enhance the African-American Business District. The Tree Commission received a City Government of the Year award from the Mississippi Urban Forest Council for the first-in-the-state use of tree-friendly Silva Cells in downtown streetscapes.

• **Building and Inspection**: Two additional code enforcement inspectors helped protect the health, safety, and welfare of Meridian’s citizens. The staff made more than 4,800 inspections and issued 638 building permits with a construction value of more than $10 million. The division’s efforts help keep residents’ insurance rates low.
Smother travels for Meridian drivers are flowing from the $2.3 million contract that the Public Works Department awarded in 2016 to resurface more than 12 miles of major thoroughfares. That represents the first phase of roadway maintenance and improvement stemming from the $7.5 million bond issue approved last year.

**PEDESTRIANS ARE GETTING HELP, TOO.**
**THE HIGHWAY 80 PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT WILL IMPROVE AND EXTEND SIDEWALKS, THANKS TO A $700,000 GRANT FROM THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.**

Improvement work in the Fifth Street area of downtown entered its final phase with the award of a $1.3 million streetscape project. Another Mississippi Department of Transportation grant provided 80 percent of the money. Along the Interstate 20/59 corridor, we facilitated economic development by building the access driveway for the new Fairfield Inn & Suites Meridian.

Public Works handles all of Meridian’s infrastructure, not just streets and sidewalks. To make sure our award-winning water system continues to serve the needs of our growing city, we have begun $6 million worth of upgrades and improvements to the aeration and process pumping system at our main wastewater treatment plant.

To protect against loss of electrical power because of severe weather or other emergencies, we have installed backup generators at the North Meridian Water Treatment Plant and the South Wastewater Treatment Plant.

We’ve also been working to reduce the City’s energy consumption. A new energy services contract will help us cut electricity costs for all City buildings and outdoor lighting, including streetlights.

We negotiated and awarded a new contract with Waste Pro for solid waste removal and disposal. In order to keep our employees safe and make sure we comply with federal law, we trained more than 70 percent of our construction and plant personnel in Occupational Safety and Health Administration 30 hour Code of Federal Regulations compliance.

Most significantly of all, the people of Public Works did their best every day, in many ways large and small, to keep our bustling, complex city running efficiently. We appreciate them, and we appreciate the opportunity to help make Meridian better.
Fun and games bring a lot of benefits to our city. At the Parks & Recreation Department, we love providing so much enjoyment to so many people. We also have positive impacts in even more significant ways.

Over the past couple of years, we have added a wide variety of youth sports programs and other activities. At the same time, the city's rate of juvenile arrests declined sharply. Since 2014, we've given the young people of our community positive ways to spend their time with such new summer programs as league basketball for ages 10-18, league baseball for ages 6-15, swimming, Pitch Hit & Run, and home run derby.

The Highland Park Splash Pad proved to be a huge hit for kids (and more than a few adults) from the day it opened last summer. Other offerings have included Punt, Pass & Kick, flag and tackle football, boxing, and jujitsu. Adults have enjoyed, among many other pastimes, flag football, basketball (including leagues for players 40 or older and for women), and women's and coed kickball.

NEW AND UPCOMING PROGRAMS INCLUDE TOUCH A TRUCK, THE SUBWAY GET FIT CHALLENGE, HALL OF ROSES, YOUTH COOKING AND SEWING CLASSES, AND END OF SCHOOL JAMS. ADULTS HAVE BEEN GETTING FIT AT THE MERIDIAN ACTIVITY CENTER THROUGH CLASSES IN FLOOR EXERCISE, STRENGTH TRAINING, YOGA, SLIMNASTICS, AND TAI CHI.

Our department and Mayor Percy Bland have worked together on many initiatives, including Teacher of the Month recognition.

Mayor Bland extends his personal involvement through such events as Pizza with Percy, Percy Fection, the Children's Fishing Rodeo, and the Father Daughter Dance.

We engage with just about every facet of our community through such other events as James Chaney Memorial Day in the Park, Magnolia Day, the Mother Son Dance, the Senior Gala, the Grandparents Appreciation Luncheon, Nickelodeon Worldwide Day of Play, and Meet Santa.

We look toward a future full of promise, epitomized by the groundbreaking for the Velma Young Community Center in Magnolia Park, which will host additional recreational and community activities and after-school programs for children.

The Meridian Parks & Recreation Department works to meet the needs of all our citizens. We will continue to grow programs, add more activities, and strive for better health in our community.

Our department and Mayor Percy Bland have worked together on many initiatives, including Teacher of the Month recognition.
Private Investment Confirms That Growth Has Begun

Growth has begun in earnest, and more is coming. Don’t take our word for it. Ask the private sector. Meridian’s hotel market is booming, with more and more rooms coming on line. Private enterprise, from inside and outside our city, has taken a look at us, likes what it sees, and is betting its own money on our future.

The substantial outside investment in such projects as the Courtyard by Marriott hotel that will transform the iconic Threefoot Building represents a vote of confidence in Meridian’s growth. Our city has worked to position itself to take off. The public and private sectors have worked hand in hand to lay the groundwork. Many, many visionary citizens have worked together behind the scenes, giving of their time and talents for the good of all. We are now seeing the rewards. Outside investors such as the Georgia-based Ascent Hospitality, redevelopers of the Threefoot Building, have taken notice. The tide is rising.

The Mississippi Children’s Museum (MCM), in concert with the community of Meridian and its leadership, moved forward with efforts to establish a satellite location in Meridian. In January 2016, with the approval of the MCM Board of Directors, the Mississippi Children’s Museum-Meridian (MCM-Meridian) launched its Inspiring minds. Creating community. Innovating futures. capital campaign. In 2016, MCM-Meridian also began the process of identifying the eventual location of the museum.

We understand that this growth will bring challenges. We are committed to make sure that it benefits all of Meridian, including those individuals and those neighborhoods that have lagged behind during the economic and social changes of recent decades.

Join with us. Let us know your thoughts. Do your part to keep up the momentum. Share in the payoff. Together, we are moving into a bright tomorrow.
All the elements have come together to make Meridian grow.
Every city has its own chemistry. Adding something new to the mix can energize elements that already exist, bringing them together in fresh and exciting ways. The Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Experience – THE MAX – will be the catalyst that will boost Meridian into a new phase of growth.

**IMPORTANT ELEMENTS FOR MOVING OUR CITY FORWARD ALREADY EXIST.**

Our central location and excellent transportation connections not only foster business of all kinds but also provide our residents with a wide range of easily accessible recreation and vacation options. Our status as a health-care powerhouse draws visitors from our surrounding region as well as highly skilled and well-paid professionals from around the country who settle here with their families. Our diverse economic mix and our proud and industrious workforce position us well to follow our free-enterprise system wherever it leads.

**Education and training represent the keys to the future for both blue-collar and white-collar businesses.**
The growth of Meridian Community College (and its new Workforce Development Center), Mississippi State University-Meridian (including its downtown Riley Campus), and other educational institutions gives Meridian’s citizens the tools they need to better themselves and their city.

When it opens next spring, THE MAX will benefit from all of those advantages and will add a strong new element: tens of thousands of tourists from all over the country and indeed all over the world. These guests will bring strong appetites for devouring all aspects of our state’s deep, rich heritage and culture.

THE MAX will accelerate the continuing revival of the downtown area. Its positive effects will ripple throughout the city, bringing economic benefits and new opportunities for individual creativity. We can’t know at this point exactly how and where the growth will occur. But we can be sure that it will happen, that it will benefit Meridian in countless ways, and that it will be a lot of fun for us all.