

Salvatore J. Panto, Jr., Mayor, City of Easton PA  
Inaugural Address – Tuesday, January 3, 2012

Thank you for being here. I am honored to have been elected again to be your mayor. This is a great privilege and I promise I will continue to work to the best of my ability every single day.

I would like to thank our residents for placing this honor on me and I assure you that our City will continue on the path of progress and fiscal responsibility that we started four years ago. We will continue to plan our City's future for the long term and not the political term.

I would not be here without you and your support. I would not be here without the support of my wife, Pam, my father, and our family. There is no end to the understanding, patience and tolerance which Pam has given to me.

Everyone has seen the improvements around our City. These improvements are not just physical improvements but improvements in our reputation as well and the way people view our city.

In the last four years we have made more infrastructure improvements that in the last 15-20 years. Although annoying at times, the installation of new water lines and new gas lines will provide safe and secure utilities for the years to come and our two city-owned bridges we own are now safe to pass after more than \$2.4 million in repairs.

Improvements to our parks, our new waterfront and trails are now being enjoyed by our residents and visitors.

After fully vetting our ideas with the public we are not afraid to make the tough decisions. One example is the road diet on Larry Holmes Drive. Many had concerns, but today that road is no longer a concrete barrier between our downtown and our waterfront. We no longer turn our backs on our waterfronts, we use them to bring more families to this great natural resource and more improvements and activities are being planned throughout the city, including this year's expansion of Heil Park and the \$4 million South Third Street Improvement Project.

We have recently weathered floods and earthquakes and snow storms -- and our City withstood all of it. Those public services which were under our control were provided to our citizens in a safe and efficient manner with the safety and welfare of our residents paramount to anything else.

We are hard at work and will continue to produce and instill pride throughout our City. Our "clean and safe" program has brought renewed faith and respect in our appearance and reputation.

We have added 11 new police officers, added additional fire fighters, code enforcement officers and housing rehabilitation programs. This will provide a direct benefit to our citizens as we see housing upgrades in our neighborhoods and a decrease in crime throughout the city.

Financially, we shall continue to "live within our means". We shall promote and attract people, businesses and investors to our City. Our real estate taxes have not been increased in 4 years. Our fiscal management has been reviewed and approved. The rating company, Standard & Poor's,

increased our bond rating from a BBB to an “A-“. This increase in rating validates that when it comes to the city’s finances -- we are serious.

We will continue to make Easton a city that is proudly and uniquely diverse, but one that operates harmoniously.

Tough decisions are made everyday and they are always made considering what is best for Easton and its residents. Infrastructure projects will continue because our residents and visitors want safe roads, bridges and underground utilities.

Our record of state and federal grants is unsurpassed by any community our size. Community and economic development working in partnership with state and federal agencies will only become more competitive and difficult but we have the team in place to continue to secure outside funding for important job-creating projects.

In the last four years we have received more than \$60 million in grant money and a total of more than \$220 million in economic development going into the next two years.

Some decisions require leadership to bring them to a successful closure and none are more important in the short term than the future Crayola project that will take this visitor attraction to the next level; the all-important intermodal project with the High School Sports Hall of Fame and the rebirth of Silk: A Creative Community. These three plus the magnificent State Theatre, Sigal Museum, Canal Museum, our historic streetscapes, our historic Farmers’ Market contribute more than 500,000 visitors to our city annually and impact our budget with more than \$1.2 million in direct revenues. This positive aura is now attracting new business enterprises in our neighborhoods like Ole Sole Mio on the South Side or Black and Blue and the expanded R&R Provisions in the West Ward, Don Juan’s and

Megs and Mads on College Hill and the soon to be opened Pomeroy building, Mt. Vernon Brew Pub, WEST and A&D Tile Buildings and Lipkins in the downtown. AND just today an agreement of sale has been signed on the Steele Building on Centre Square --- former home of Lenny's.

No program we have initiated in the last four years is more important or exciting to me than our Green Rehab Program where we purchase homes needing a lot of attention, put people to work rehabbing them and sell the units to solid middle class American families. This program is being expanded and we will change neighborhoods --- one house at a time if necessary.

There are so many other success stories but time doesn't allow me to mention them all this evening because tonight is not a time to reflect back on the city of deficits and annual tax and fee increases that we inherited and what we've been able to accomplish the last four years and the progress that we've made. Tonight we look to the future and set our path for further success.

New times demand new answers; old problems cry out for better results. The decisions we make in the next two to three years will determine what Easton will look like in the next twenty or thirty.

One area we will improve upon is to inspire people to become more involved in the city and help to raise the city to the next level. We have to raise the self-esteem of the city and galvanize the people to become involved so we can reach that next level. We will do this through better communication of meetings, events and civic opportunities. We will upgrade The Bugler to be more of a city-wide newsletter. We will also be capturing as many email addresses as possible.

I have read about and experienced the peaks and valleys of Easton. Now, it is time to truly unite the people of this community as one and that is my goal as your mayor --to fulfill our common vision of a city of vitality, hospitality, and energy, celebrating new ideas, creating a culture of entrepreneurship that will lead to job growth, a robust economy, and a platform for all citizens to reach their potential.

State and federal government will not do the hard work for us—in fact, sometimes they make it harder. It is now in our hands to build a future that sustains us and where our children inherit a City that is stronger than we found it.

Our number-one goal in the next four years must be to rebuild our neighborhoods, retain existing businesses and jobs, create new jobs, and attract new people. This means we must do something that is counter-intuitive—grow our city at the very same time that the economy is forcing us to reduce the expense of government.

Think about it—dynamic growth at a time of fewer resources. That's a tough job, and government alone will not get this job done. To grow Easton more in a time of economic uncertainty, we must use every resource that we possess as a people—government, business, our schools, our communities, our families—indeed, our culture.

But putting everything else aside for a minute, let's look around us and see what is truly best about Easton. Look at the people in this room, your neighbors at home, the friendships and relationships that are the basis and the backbone of a strong and supportive community. You and I are a product of that spirit and that dream to be better, to be successful. We are another layer of that bedrock and the stability upon which Easton continues to build. We carry in our hearts the promises of many generations before

us and their dreams of a better life. Who are we to let those dreams pass and not fulfill them? It is this faith that joins us to one another, and which is cemented by our bond of trust.

Together, we can succeed in this new mission. But apart and divided, we will surely fail.

We are entrusted with an opportunity and, indeed, an obligation to leave Easton a better place than we found it - a stronger, safer, healthier, and more equitable city.

Tonight isn't about me; it's about us. Tonight is a celebration of our community's accomplishments in the last four years. Tonight is about our similarities. It's about who we are and what we can be.

In closing, I shall leave you with these words from Abraham Lincoln: "He has the right to criticize, who has the heart to help." Please give me your help, your criticism and your assistance to make our Easton the best that it can be.

Thank You and God Bless You.