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# DRAFT City of Savannah 2019 State Legislative Agenda

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## **LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

**1. Short Term Vacation Rentals:** Support home rule regulation of short term rentals as necessary for quality of life, public safety and a competitive lodging marketplace. Support the legal use of properties as short term or vacation rentals by individuals licensed to do business and pay the appropriate state and local taxes.

**2. Logistics Technology Corridor Funding:** Provide State funding to develop logistics technology job training, innovation center, and incentives to develop the Savannah area into the global center of logistics innovation.

**3. Georgia Works Credit:** Request that the State enact a 10 percent Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to lower the tax burden for working families and boost the local economy. The federal EITC averages \$2,300 per tax return. Twenty-nine states currently have a State EITC.

**4. Confiscated Weapons:** Allow local governments to choose whether they'll sell confiscated weapons at auction or have them destroyed.

State law passed in 2012 requires all law enforcement agencies in Georgia to auction off most of the guns they confiscate to licensed gun dealers if they cannot return them to the lawful owners. Requiring law enforcement to reintroduce confiscated weapons into the community works against efforts made by our law enforcement professionals.

**5. Abandoned Shopping Cart Ordinance:** Oppose State legislation that would pre-empt local regulations designed to create common-sense procedures that incentivize retail stores to be more accountable for their shopping carts, which are often abandoned by customers on City rights of way, causing persistent neighborhood blight.

**6. Funding for Behavioral Health Crisis Centers:** Request full funding for additional behavioral health crisis centers to help divert the mentally ill from incarceration.

## **GDOT REQUESTS**

**Benton Boulevard and Highlands Boulevard:** Funding assistance to widen to four lanes Benton Boulevard and Highlands Boulevard at their intersection with the Jimmy DeLoach Parkway.

**GDOT Maintenance of Limited Access Highways:** The City requests that the Georgia Department of Transportation take over maintenance of the Jimmy DeLoach Parkway, the Truman Parkway and Veterans Parkway.

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## **LEGISLATIVE ITEMS OF SUPPORT**

**State Funding for Convention Center Expansion:** Support efforts to obtain funding necessary to begin the building phase of the Savannah Convention Center expansion project.

**Amend Taxpayer Bill of Rights Advertising Requirements to Increase Transparency to the Public:** State-required advertising language has created confusion amongst the public when taxing authorities are setting the millage rate. State Law should be amended to allow plain language.

**Small Cell Legislation and Regulation of ROWs:** Oppose State legislation that pre-empts or otherwise diminishes cities' ability to responsibly regulate their community's rights of way.

**Permitting Process:** The City urges the State to allow cities to locally manage the building permitting process.

**REQUESTED ITEMS OF STUDY:** City Council requested more information on the following items:

**Commercial Property Tax Assessments:** In 2017 the City of Savannah joined the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to support measures that limited unanticipated large-percentage swings in annual commercial property tax increases. That year the Legislature passed a bill sponsored by State Rep. Ron Stephens that authorized the use of income and expense data supplied by the property owner to be utilized in the assessment of commercial property. Other measures that put a cap on the percentage increase of commercial assessments from year to year have gained no traction in the Legislature, and have been opposed by other municipalities and the Georgia Municipal Association.

**State Alcohol License Statute:** As requested, the City Attorney's Office is exploring potential changes to State law to give local jurisdictions more discretion when deciding whether to approve or deny an alcohol license. That study continues.