



MAYOR STEVEN M. FULOP

requests the honor of your presence at the

2017
State of the City Address
Ward A

Monday, March 20, 2017

6:30pm

Dr. Maya Angelou P.S. 20

239 Ocean Avenue

RSVP not required. Please check www.jerseycitynj.gov for weather alerts.

Good evening, and welcome to our fifth State of the City together.

I want to thank the public officials from the state and the county who have joined us tonight; members of the clergy; members of the court; the Jersey City Council who have been partners in everything we do; fellow members of my administration; and, most importantly, you, the residents of this great city.

I want to start by welcoming you to the fifth address of this series, which is focused on Ward A.

While we have worked hard to build one Jersey City, we understand that each of our communities require a tailored address that highlights the local issues most important to you and to your neighborhood.

Tonight, I hope to speak to these local initiatives, as well as touch on some of the larger citywide accomplishments and goals.

In July of 2013, I stood in front of City Hall and took the oath of office as the 49th mayor of Jersey City.

It was one of the proudest moments of my life, and something I remain thankful for each and every day.

As your new mayor, I promised I would work to make you proud, and that is what we have tried to do as an administration for the past three and a half years.

I spoke about bringing jobs to our residents and about bringing investment to neighborhoods west of the waterfront.

I talked about the importance of strong schools and the drive to provide all of Jersey City's students with the opportunities they deserve.

I was passionate about encouraging new businesses to move into Jersey City, and about how small businesses are the foundation of our local economy.

I talked about my commitment to making Jersey City one of the best mid-sized cities in the country, and while we still have more work to do, I believe we have started to reach the benchmarks we set out to achieve.

During those first few moments, on the steps of City Hall, I outlined my plan, and my hope, to build an administration that would truly move our city forward.

We have had some incredible successes, as well as some challenging moments, but overall, I am proud to report to you that the state of the city is as strong as ever.

I honestly believe that the success of any government is measured by tangible results, and I know that we have so much we can point to that proves our progress.

During the past three and a half years, we have built a city that has become the economic engine of the region; a city that has become an example of innovative solutions to social issues; and a city that has accomplished it all while remaining fiscally responsible to its residents.

We have seen unemployment in Jersey City drop to the lowest rate in 25 years.

This has been no coincidence, but rather, has been the result of a deliberate process of working together with businesses to bring jobs and stability back to Jersey City.

On both job creation and small business creation, we are number one in New Jersey.

With job creation at the forefront of our policy priorities, we have brought over 7,000 jobs to Jersey City during the past three and a half years, and have seen over 600 new small businesses open here.

We certainly have more work to do when it comes to ensuring that these jobs are being made available to all residents, especially groups that have been previously overlooked, but I feel as though we have begun to take important steps forward.

We have continued to lead the state in construction starts, and for the first time we can say that development is not exclusive to one neighborhood.

Whether you live on the West Side or in Journal Square - you have seen the outcome of the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of investment that we have brought in to our city.

Above all, it is important to us that this progress is inclusive, and we have worked hard to ensure that there are opportunities for all residents, in all wards.

We have built more affordable housing during the past three years than the previous administration had built in 10, and this year, we plan to expand on this progress.

We have continued to invest in housing for our city's veterans as well, and as a Marine, these projects are especially meaningful to me.

We were the first in New Jersey to take on Michelle Obama's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, and we are well on our way to accomplishing this goal.

This past October, we opened a development specifically for homeless and disabled veterans.

This year, we will continue to build on this progress, with an upcoming Ocean Avenue project in partnership with the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency that will add another 20 veteran-priority units.

I am proud of the work we have done to make Jersey City a truly inclusive and progressive place, and I am exceptionally proud that our city has served as a model to others on so many policy initiatives.

We were the first in New Jersey to enact paid sick leave legislation; we were the first in NJ to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour for our municipal workers; we were the first in NJ to provide trans-inclusive coverage to city employees; we are the gold standard in New Jersey for creation of a model for prisoner reentry programs; and we launched one of the largest bike share programs in the country.

This year we just regained the title as the most diverse city in the country.

Regardless of the neighborhood in which you live, I am sure that you have experienced the ways in which this diversity adds to the vibrancy of our city.

This is a truly unique place to live, to work, and to grow up, and I hope that every day, you are proud to live in a place that celebrates culture, and values all residents for exactly who they are.

Most importantly though, we have effectively kept our promises to grow our economy, and expand services to our residents, without raising taxes.

For three years in a row, residents have seen no municipal tax increases.

We are holding the line on taxes despite the fact that we are growing our police force, expanding affordable housing, and investing millions of dollars in city parks.

Few cities in New Jersey can make this sort of claim.

Not only have we kept taxes flat for three years, but we have also seen three consecutive years of credit ratings upgrades, further validating our progress.

This year, we are committed to keeping this promise yet again, with the announcement tonight of no tax increases for the fourth straight year.

Tonight, I stand before you to deliver the final State of the City of my first mayoral term.

I am honored to have been given the opportunity to serve each and every one of our city's residents during the past three and half years.

Each day of this term has brought us closer to defining, and effectively implementing our shared, collective vision for the future of our city.

We have never showed signs of slowing, never relied simply on our most noteworthy accomplishments to move us forward, and never stopped working to build one Jersey City, issue by issue, neighborhood by neighborhood.

Let's start with education.

Throughout the past three and a half years, I have continued to stand by my wholehearted commitment to providing quality education for all of Jersey City's students.

We have made incredible investments in enhancing education in all neighborhoods, and perhaps most notably, we have regained nearly full local control over our public school district in partnership with the Board of Education.

After having been controlled by the state for more than twenty years, we are seeing true progress in improving education for all of Jersey City's students.

Our city's teachers, administrators, the Jersey City Board of Education and Dr. Lyles deserve credit for this accomplishment.

This year, we have shown the strength of this promise with the opening of the Dr. Maya Angelou school in Greenville, which was championed by Senator Cunningham.

This school is the first to be constructed in more than a decade, and now serves over 600 students from this neighborhood in this state-of-the-art facility.

We also look forward to the opening of two additional schools - an Elementary School in the Heights, and a new public school to open Downtown.

While we view the increased demand on our schools as a constructive challenge, we also view it as an indicator of our success in building a city in which families want to grow in.

We have seen an incredible surge of new residents move into Jersey City during the past few years, and now we are seeing that families are not only beginning here, but that they are staying as well.

We want to make Jersey City a place that allows children to explore their interests, discover new ideas, and learn in exciting ways.

We also want our city's youth to have access to opportunities that will allow them to succeed.

Just a few weeks ago, the City Council approved plans for the expansion of the Liberty Science Center, known as SciTech Scity.

The \$280 million project will be developed by the science center in conjunction with the city, and will feature a biotech lab, a coding lab, a technology business incubator and a K-12 STEM-focused public school.

This is truly a transformative project, and one that will establish Jersey City as the home of the region's premier innovation destination, as well as educate the next generation of students as leaders in the fields of science and technology.

We know that thriving communities include places to live, work and learn, but we also recognize the importance of investing in places to play as well.

We have made significant investments in parks and open space in this city, and know that in the past, these valuable community assets were too often overlooked.

Last year, we opened Berry Lane Park, a project that we pushed through to completion by reallocating city resources and pursuing additional grant funding.

This former industrial site is now the city's largest municipal park, and the first to be constructed in decades.

When we opened this flagship park, we knew that this park would bring together families from all over the city, and I hope you and your family have had a chance to explore this 17-acre park, with its basketball courts, soccer fields, a football field and a spray park.

As we work to enhance our city through investing in the local economy, education and parks, it became increasingly important for us to speak directly to the residents of each ward, not only about the state of the city as a whole, but also about the progress we are making in each individual neighborhood, for example, right here in Greenville.

We value the unique qualities of each of our diverse neighborhoods, and understand the individual role each plays as an important piece of the puzzle.

We are here at the Dr. Maya Angelou Elementary School tonight to talk about the importance of Greenville, and the commitments we plan on making over the next year to move this neighborhood forward.

This year, in Ward A, we promise to work to produce more affordable housing, to move forward on some important development and investment projects in the area, to increase our police force presence in this neighborhood, to provide more job opportunities to members of this community and importantly we will start on a new 5 acre park right here.

These are our commitments to you as we start 2017.

I know that residents of this neighborhood in particular, for decades, have felt forgotten.

But in reality, Greenville is full of residents, many of whom have been here for decades and who simply want more opportunities and a renewed commitment from their elected officials to moving Greenville forward.

Since the very beginning of this administration, we have worked hard to rebuild this crucial neighborhood, and have taken important steps towards moving Greenville forward, together.

While we can't fix decades of mismanagement overnight, we have started to turn the corner.

Since the start of this administration, public safety has been at the forefront of our policies and priorities.

We know that new jobs, new schools, and new services must be complemented by a strong sense of security in order to be considered successful.

We have spent the past three and a half years strengthening our police force and finding innovative solutions to our city's public safety challenges.

However, the truth is, crime still exists in some of our neighborhoods and communities, and we are not blind to the reality of our challenges.

It comes as no surprise to anyone in this room tonight that crime is still something we struggle with in this particular neighborhood.

We are aware of this, and we understand the toll this takes on you and your family.

We have accomplished much during the past few years, both here and throughout the city, but the truth is, building a safer neighborhood for everyone in this room, and everyone in this community, is the part of my job that I take most seriously.

Yes, development in Journal Square or new businesses in the Heights are great for our city, but if I can find ways to make residents of this community feel more comfortable walking home at night, or to feel a greater sense of pride in this neighborhood, then I know we have done our job.

We have not ignored this issue or brushed it aside, but rather, have taken firm and strategic steps towards solving these issues.

I cannot stress enough the impact more police officers will have on this city, and I am proud of the steps we have taken to grow our police force to the largest it is has been in 20 years.

When we first took office in 2013, the Jersey City Police Department was at an all time low of manpower - 779 police officers.

It was my goal to expand our police force to over 900 officers during our first term, and I am proud to report that the most recent class of police recruits brings our police force to 922 officers- the largest it has been in over two decades.

This year, we are committing to further strengthening our police department by hiring two new classes of recruits, which will add 50 new officers to our police force.

We are committed to having a police department of 950 officers by the end of my first term.

Building a safer city begins with building a strong police force, and I promise we will never stop working towards this goal.

Many of the police officers who joined the police force in the past year have been placed in the South and West Districts on walking posts right here in this community.

Our most recent class of recruits spent their first month of training immersed in the communities they will soon be serving, which was the first time our training program began this way.

We hired this class one month early so that they could integrate and learn about the community they will soon serve.

Some of the community members in this room actually worked to organize a meeting to make sure that local residents could engage with these new officers, and I want to thank Denise Ridley for assisting in our efforts.

The officers visited local organizations, churches and met with leaders who were able to give important insight on the types of issues these neighborhoods face, and ways in which these officers can better understand and serve those particular concerns.

The only way to build a safer city is through strong partnerships within the community, and I believe that this new initiative for our recruits speaks to our commitment to building those relationships.

I would like to ask the members of this new class to please stand and be recognized for their dedication.

It was only a few years ago that we inherited a police department that did not adequately reflect the diversity of our communities.

We have come a long way since then, and I am proud that over 70% of the officers hired since 2013 have been minorities.

This year, we swore in one of the most diverse classes of police officers in the city's history, and have placed an emphasis on continuing to build a police department that represents the composition of this city.

It is important that our new officers have the tools they need to be effective, and we have employed community members to help identify innovative solutions that complement our officer's efforts.

Our administration put in place the first public safety review board for the police department, comprised of people who live and work here.

With their leadership, we recently started the installation of an entirely new CCTV camera program, with 200 cameras being installed throughout the city.

We are beginning to install these cameras in the South and West Districts, with the remainder of the cameras being installed later this year.

Improved technology has had a major impact on our efforts to solve our public safety challenges, and we have made it our goal to be at the forefront of these types of innovations.

While new technology helps our officers make more informed decisions, it does not replace the type of crucial information that can be gained through positive community-officer relationships.

I want to recognize a group that we work with who have taken incredible steps toward successfully building community relationships, and one that will continue to make lasting impressions on the residents, and children, of this community.

Black Law Enforcement Serving the Community, is an organization of law enforcement officers who are committed to giving back to their community through mentoring and service.

These officers care deeply about this neighborhood, and volunteer their time to work within the community to promote anti-gang and anti-violence messages, and they have been terrific partners.

I am exceptionally proud of this group, and each of the officers who take the time to make a difference, while in and out of uniform, and I look forward to working together to build a stronger and safer Greenville.

I would like to ask John Boamah, Anthony Smith, and Rashaun Spence of BLESC to stand and be recognized.

But it isn't only police on the public safety front, as we proudly have the best Fire Department in the State of New Jersey and our administration continues to invest in the resources needed to make sure our residents are safe.

Right now, we have 603 firefighters, which is the largest the department has been since 1995, and we have another 51 firefighters in the pipeline to join this year.

A better way to think about this is that the previous administration would take offline an average of 4 firefighting companies per day, every day, putting residents at risk.

By working together with the unions, we have not only increased the number of firefighters, but this year, 100 percent of our active fire companies will be staffed, and we have done it all while keeping taxes stable.

Our approach to public safety is comprehensive, and effectively incorporates new technology and community involvement to build safer neighborhoods.

However, we also recognize that by investing in the local economy, we have the ability to transform neighborhoods as well, and that new business and new jobs are necessary in creating strong, safe and thriving communities.

The local economy is the pulse of any city, and our approach to building one Jersey City starts with strengthening the economies within our neighborhoods.

We have worked to encourage projects that will bring life to areas of the city that deserve them the most.

It is no secret that Greenville has been a long-overlooked neighborhood when it comes to economic development.

When my administration first took office, we worked to find ways to prioritize this neighborhood, and saw the importance of investing here.

Since then, we have made significant strides in rebuilding this crucial neighborhood, and I know that the future of Greenville has never looked better.

Last year, we worked to identify ways to incentivize private investment along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, one of this neighborhood's most important commercial corridors.

Several public meetings were held to bring community members together to help the city develop the Jackson Hill Redevelopment Plan.

This plan lays out a roadmap for attracting residential and commercial development along the 2.4 mile long commercial corridor connecting McGinley Square to Greenville, including a major stretch of Martin Luther King Drive that extends into this neighborhood.

New businesses and activity along this main street will help strengthen this neighborhood in important ways, and we are excited to watch as new life and new opportunities begin to take shape here.

We saw an opportunity to spur business growth on Ocean Avenue as well, which has also served as one of the city's most historic main streets.

Through community input and a partnership with the South Greenville Neighborhood Association, the city developed a redevelopment plan that will spark crucial investment along this corridor.

I want to thank the South Greenville Neighborhood Association and each resident who took part in these workshops for caring about our community, and helping lay out the strategy to bring businesses back to this important commercial hub.

The first step is laying out the framework in a comprehensive way and I feel we have taken those crucial first steps.

Encouraging development that has the ability to transform this neighborhood, while providing opportunities to this community, has been incredibly important to us.

Two of the most important projects in the city are actually happening right here in Ward A.

First, We are especially excited for the expansion of New Jersey City University's campus here in Ward A, which will include new residential housing and retail space.

This is one of the largest and most transformative projects in the entire city.

This expansion will be located on a 21-acre vacant site here in Ward A.

As mentioned before, it will include new residential housing, new student housing, retail including a brand new large supermarket for residents on the south side of the city.

A project of this magnitude will have an incredible impact, and will bring new opportunities, jobs and activity to this underutilized area.

In addition to the NJCU project, we are also proud that the Bayfront project is moving forward, and we are excited about the positive impact this large-scale development will have on this community.

The Bayfront site will be transformed into thousands of housing units on the Hackensack River.

This once contaminated site will also include three incredible public parks, additional open space, new transportation options, and extensive retail and office space.

This incredible transit-oriented development will spark the creation of Jersey City's second gold coast, and will bring new opportunities that this neighborhood will benefit from.

We have started to receive bids for this development, and later this year, we expect to select a partner developer to work alongside Honeywell and the City.

This project will be to the West Side of Jersey City what Newport was to Downtown in the 1980s.

We have made important improvements to the infrastructure of the neighborhood as well.

For example, we installed water pumps on Mina Drive in Country Village to help with flooding issues that were long overdue on the south side of the city.

More recently on infrastructure, the city began a repaving program to resurface over 16 miles of roads throughout the city.

In Greenville specifically, this included major streets such as Ocean Avenue and Dwight Street, among many additional roadways that were neglected for a long time.

As we work to improve the type of local infrastructure that residents of this neighborhood use everyday, we are also working to prioritize improvements and expansion of open space for all residents to enjoy.

This is a neighborhood that values its parks, and this year, we are committed to improving these important community spaces.

First, we are upgrading Columbia Park with improved lighting, electrical and plumbing infrastructure, monument restoration, and playground safety improvements.

This is being made possible because of our close partnerships with the Columbia Park Greenville Memorial group and the Jersey City Parks Coalition.

These \$400,000 worth of improvements will provide the children and families of this neighborhood the enhanced community space they deserve.

We are also looking to expand open space within the next few weeks with the acquisition of 5 acres of land located off of Sullivan Drive behind Country Village.

This land acquisition will pave the way for us to rehabilitate the 5 acres of unutilized land to include passive recreation for residents and seniors.

Later this year, we will start community meetings in collaboration with the Jersey City Parks Coalition and the residents of Country Village to discuss the design goals for this space.

We have finished a 17 acre park in Ward F and this will be the next step in the creation of another large park for residents to enjoy.

We have made a true commitment to partnering with Jersey City Parks Coalition during the past year, and this is the latest step in that commitment to building a more sustainable city.

Just as we have invested in enhanced parks, new police officers, improved roads, and new development to build a stronger local economy, it is important that we provide the resources necessary for people to stay in their homes and be part of the changing city.

That is why this year we will take several important steps to make sure that our lifelong residents can continue to call Jersey City home.

I mentioned earlier that we have built more affordable housing units in the last three years than in the previous ten years combined, however we know that we are still just scraping the surface.

This year, we are committing to another 600.

We will also continue to push for more projects with inclusionary affordable housing.

As we scale back and revise our tax abatement program, the one place we will continue to focus is affordable housing.

Last October, the city broke ground on a 64-unit affordable housing development, The Dr. Lena Frances Edward Project, here in Greenville.

This development, which will not only provide new housing opportunities to residents of this neighborhood, but will also provide new economic activity through its commercial retail space.

This project was made possible in part through a \$1.5 million grant from the Jersey City Affordable Housing Trust Fund, as we continue to lead the state in the number of new affordable units.

Another important step in protecting our residents is the expansion of our landlord-tenant office in City Hall.

This office hasn't seen a significant upgrade in decades, and this year we will provide additional resources and caseworkers to expand capacity.

We will revamp the landlord-tenant office website so that tenants have easier access to important information.

We will also create a database of lawyers who can help advocate for tenant rights when problems arise.

We aim to provide our residents with the resources they need to ensure that they feel protected in their homes and in their communities.

Last month, with the support of Council President Rolando Lavarro and activists like Michael Griffin from Ward F and his team, an ordinance was introduced that strengthens our city's rules regarding door-to-door solicitations.

We understand that aggressive real estate solicitations may make homeowners feel uncomfortable and vulnerable in their own homes, and we have taken real measures to resolve this issue.

The city will establish a "No-Knock" Registry that will help protect homeowners from door-to-door solicitations, and will safeguard their privacy.

We are taking important steps towards rebuilding this neighborhood, and ensuring that residents who have long been important members of this community have the ability to remain here.

Yet, we have not overlooked some of the most important members of the Greenville community- its students.

That is why we have added over 30 new recreation programs and have reappropriated our budget to include nearly \$1 million toward expanding these programs since the start of our administration.

Last year, we expanded parks and recreation programming in all six wards, and began collaborating with the Board of Education to bring programming to the city's schools.

In addition to conventional activities, such as basketball and soccer, after school programming also includes educational opportunities, including an engineering workshop and homework assistance.

This year, we will begin a mentoring program as part of this partnership right here, in PS 20.

The programs we have added also rely on strong partnerships with groups within the community.

I want to recognize a group that has been serving as an example of a positive force in this community, and one that has taken the initiative to empower young women, in this neighborhood and beyond.

The H.O.N.E.Y Bees, who are here with us tonight, have continued to grow during the past year into a community organization that motivates and empowers young women through double-dutch.

This team, which celebrated placing in a national championship last year, has worked in tandem with the city's Recreation Department to mentor and empower these young women, instilling in them the confidence they need to be successful.

I would like to ask Takeria Clark and Kimberly Prince of the H.O.N.E.Y Bees to stand up.

Just as these groups value this community, I have worked since my first moments as mayor to make each and every resident within this community proud to be from Greenville.

This neighborhood had long been a forgotten place, and the level of neglect that can be seen here took decades to occur.

Many of these issues cannot be solved overnight, or even, in a single mayoral term.

However, I truly believe we have begun to lay the framework that will revive this community and restore hope in its residents.

Over the coming year, our major focus on public safety and affordable housing in Greenville will continue to move this neighborhood forward in significant ways.

As stated earlier, the success of any administration is measured by results.

Just as I stood on the steps of City Hall almost four years ago to discuss future priorities for our administration, I stand before you this evening to outline the successes we have accomplished together, as a community.

We did not come here tonight to simply offer a checklist of everything we have done right during the past three and a half years, but rather, we are here this evening to reassure you that we are making incredible progress together, and are moving forward in truly exciting ways.

Most importantly, I wanted to give you an honest assessment of where our administration stands on critical issues that impact your life every day and where we will focus on in 2017.

As our city, and our neighborhoods, continue to grow, we promise to never stop improving, and we hope tonight has served as further proof that we spend each and every day working to move this city forward.

Your presence here tonight shows that you care, and that you are willing to play a role in making our community even stronger.

I sincerely thank each and every one of you for this, and I look forward to continuing to work together.

I have found that building relationships with residents, and partnerships within the community, has truly been one of the most rewarding experiences of being mayor.

As we look to the future, please know that we will continue to act with personal care and attention, offering everything we have to creating one Jersey City that affords resources and success to all of our residents.

With your help and perseverance, even during these politically divisive times, I am certain that we will continue to unite our neighborhoods, and we will all be better for our efforts.

Thank you and God Bless Jersey City.