



MAYOR STEVEN M. FULOP

requests the honor of your presence at the

2017
State of the City Address
Ward C

Monday, February 27, 2017

6:30pm

Franklin L. Williams M.S. 7

222 Laidlaw Avenuee

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

Good evening, and welcome to our fourth 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, the residents of this great city.

I want to start by welcoming you to the second address of this series, which is focused on Ward C. 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 the state of the city is strong, and only getting stronger.

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, which might be considered our most remarkable achievement.

We have seen unemployment in Jersey City drop to its lowest rate in 25 years. This has been no coincidence, but rather, it 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 proudly 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, with nearly 10,000 units currently under construction, and another 17,000 units approved. For the first time we can say that development is not exclusive to one neighborhood. Whether you live on the West Side or in the Heights – 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 any prior administration in the city's history. By prioritizing mixed-income developments, we have made incredible progress in bringing affordable units to all neighborhoods, and plan to expand on this success in 2017.

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, which includes on-site social services. I want to thank Freeholder Bill O'Dea, and Pat Kelleher of the Hudson County Building Trades for volunteering thousands of construction hours to make this project possible. I would like to ask these individuals to stand up and be recognized.

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 20 veteran-priority units, with units reserved specifically for homeless veterans.

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 became the first in New Jersey to enact paid sick leave legislation; to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour for our municipal workers; to provide trans-inclusive coverage to city employees; to create a nationwide model for prisoner reentry programs; and to launch a citywide bike share program.

Most importantly, we have effectively kept our promises to grow our economy, and expand services to our residents, without raising taxes. For the third year in a row, residents have seen no tax increases, despite a growing police force, the expansion of affordable housing, and the investment of millions of dollars in city parks. Few cities in New Jersey can make this claim, and this year we are committed to keeping this promise yet again, with the announcement of stable taxes for the fourth straight year. Last year, we also received our third consecutive credit rating

upgrade, which serves as further validation of the progress we are making.

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.

The vitality of our neighborhoods is so important to us, that it became increasingly clear that this year's State of the City should address each ward individually. We wanted to bring together the residents of these wards to talk not only about the state of the city as a whole, but also about the progress we are making in your neighborhood. 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 Franklin L. Williams Middle School tonight to talk about the importance of Journal Square, and the commitments we plan on making to move this neighborhood forward.

In the early 1980's, the New York Times published an article predicting that Journal Square's road to recovery would be a long one, and highlighted the growing uncertainty that this neighborhood could ever become the booming economic hub it once was. During that same period in the 1980's, development began to occur up and down the Hudson River, as many realized the relative ease of revitalizing the waterfront. And yet, the geographic heart of this city, Journal Square, remained in disrepair. For decades, past administrations continued to fall short on their promises to revitalize this community.

Today, I truly believe that Journal Square's long road to recovery is coming to an end, and that that the best success story of our ever-changing city is being written right now, and right here. We strive to uphold the promises that prior administrations have so often broken, and we know that Journal Square's best years are right around the corner.

We have started to see the first significant construction occur in Journal Square in decades. From almost anywhere in the city, or in the region, you can see the beginnings of this new investment. The Journal Squared project, which will be comprised of three high-rise towers, will significantly change the city's skyline upon its completion. From the top of the hill, the new Journal Square skyline will serve as a reminder that development in Jersey City is spreading west, and that our expansive skyline will soon rival that of any major city in the country. The first of these towers will soon begin leasing, bringing with it new residents and new activity. As residential development continues to grow, so too will the confidence in this neighborhood for our city's business owners, and we have already started to see new restaurants and shops make a home in this community. For years, past administrations promised that the development

in Journal Square was on the way. I am proud that that this moment is finally here, and we are committed to continuing to deliver on these past promises.

Yet, our goals for Journal Square's revitalization go beyond new residential development. A decade from now, we want Journal Square to once again be the heart of this city, just as it was many years ago. We aim to build a neighborhood that is dynamic and diverse, and one that will become a cultural destination for visitors throughout the region.

For decades, the Loew's Theater has served as a major cultural asset for this neighborhood, and for this city. It is no secret that our administration has had disagreements over the direction of this theater. However, this year, we have made a resolution to repair our relationship with the Friends of the Loew's, and build a productive partnership that will improve the capacity and capability of this historic theater. I know that we share the common goal of restoring this theater to the iconic community space it once was. In the past, we had attempted to initiate the restoration of this theater with the city as the driving force. We have come to recognize the benefits of collaborating with the Friends of the Loew's on this project, and this year, they will be the driving force behind this restoration, receiving the support and guidance from our administration. We plan to jointly solicit RFPs for management and restoration beginning in late March to begin this process of revitalization. I look forward to working together to move the Loew's Theater, and Journal Square, forward.

Culture and arts in Journal Square will extend beyond the Loew's Theater, and we are committed to providing creative opportunities to residents of all ages. Both the historic Loew's Theater and creative spaces like Mana Contemporary have laid the foundation for creating a thriving arts community in this neighborhood. We have built a strong relationship with Mana Contemporary over the years, and enjoy an open communication with this facility to share events and refer artists and community partners.

We wanted to expand on this neighborhood's community of artists. We have recently announced a change to the Journal Square redevelopment plan that is expected to spur further investments in arts and culture in the space behind the Loew's Theater. This zoning change incentivizes new developments to include spaces for theaters, galleries, studios, museums and retail, and will help to bring artists from throughout the region into this area, while also working to support our city's existing community of artists. Through a partnership with the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency, this change will also increase contributions into the Jersey City Arts Fund, which will work to further develop arts and cultural spaces throughout this neighborhood. This is a small change that will have a big impact in the years to come as to how this neighborhood will grow, and I am excited to watch a vibrant arts community continue to take shape here.

We are hoping to further the development of this arts district by investing locally in community spaces centered on arts and culture. A second example of this creative development is the purchase of the Pathside Building, which will occur in partnership with Hudson County later this

year. Located in the heart of Journal Square, we hope to transform this space into the home of the a new regional art museum. This neighborhood provides enormous potential for this museum, and we know this space will not only serve as a benefit for the surrounding community, but will evolve into a place that brings in visitors from throughout the region. The previous Jersey City Museum failed largely because of its location- there was no parking and it wasn't near mass transportation. I know that we can make the new museum a success here in Journal Square. We hope to partner with the recently formed Jersey City Arts Council to guide the programming and community events that this space will provide. Our goal is to close on this purchase from the County by the middle of the year.

This year, we also plan to finally open the Apple Tree House- one of Jersey City's most historic sites. Renovations of this building have been underway through several administrations, and it has been in the process of repairs for more than a decade. I am proud that we are completing these renovations, and we are excited to announce the opening of this center to the public this summer. This building will be home to a community space with ongoing exhibits highlighting the history of our great city through a partnership with the New Jersey Room by the Jersey City Public Library. Additionally, we plan to locate the offices of the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Jersey City Economic Development Corporation on the top floor.

Our commitment to making Journal Square the cultural heart of the city is comprehensive and robust. We understand the importance of investing here, and I know that we are building a framework that will allow the residents of this neighborhood to succeed.

As part of the Pathside Building transfer from the county, we will also be transferring Jersey City owned land to the County as part of our commitment to build a larger and more improved state-of-the-art Justice Complex here in Journal Square. This facility will be relocated in the vicinity of our current court complex on Newark Avenue. The new buildings will house the criminal and family courts, and will include additional parking. This project will serve as a catalyst for growth in the surrounding area, as businesses begin to see increased activity, and residents from throughout Hudson County travel through Journal Square to access the County's court services.

With increased activity comes an increased need for infrastructure improvements, and we have taken steps to ensure that this neighborhood's growth occurs in smart and safe ways. From roadway reconstruction projects on Academy Street to safety improvements on Sip Avenue, we are taking important steps to improving our city's infrastructure. We understand the inconveniences caused by the projects being done on state highways that connect our communities, and know that they impact Jersey City residents. We promise to continue to push for quick completion of these state projects so that we can revert back to better traffic flow and movement throughout the city.

As our infrastructure improves, as new businesses and residential developments begin to appear, and as we encourage the growth of a vibrant arts district, we want to ensure that above

all, the community that has witnessed the ups and downs of this changing neighborhood continues to feel at home in Journal Square. As an administration, we look forward to embracing this growing neighborhood along with with the existing community, because we truly believe the positive impact of these changes can be shared by residents both old and new. As this neighborhood's new residents are introduced to this community, we encourage them to become engaged with current residents, exemplifying the understanding, kindness and harmony that has come to define our city.

Jersey City's strong network of community associations help to bridge this gap, bringing together residents of all types to discuss local issues. These groups provide an enormous benefit to both residents and our administration, and I value the relationships we have built with them over the years. I want to publicly thank the Hilltop Neighborhood Association for serving as long-time partners to our efforts in this ward, and I look forward to continuing to work together on improving this community.

Journal Square has recently seen the emergence of a new neighborhood association, the New JSQ Community Association, and I want to thank Bill Armbruster, Renee Tirella Cassidy, Kevin Bing, Mark Weller, and Irina Zaki for taking the initiative to make your voices heard. I ask that this group stand and be recognized.

During a recent meeting with this group, we were asked to increase the number of police officers on walking posts in this area, and to expand assistance to the neighborhood's homeless population. We are committed to solving these issues, and we thank this group for bringing these concerns to our attention in a constructive and collaborative way.

We promise to assign more officers to walking posts in Journal Square this Spring. Building safe and comfortable communities begins with positive interactions with officers on the street, and we encourage our foot patrol officers to engage with residents of this neighborhood.

Regarding the need for more services for the neighborhood's homeless population, our Department of Community Development, in conjunction with Garden State Episcopal and other local partners, has focused their outreach efforts on connecting homeless individuals to much needed services, benefits, and programs, such as rapid re-housing or rental assistance. Last year, we spent nearly \$1 million on providing these services, and connected over 1,500 individuals to housing case management.

This year, our funding priorities for the homeless will focus on the expansion of our outreach services in Journal Square. With more outreach workers and a focus on particular hot spots in this neighborhood, we hope to connect more individuals with emergency housing or rental assistance. Additionally, we plan to continue to support the Hudson County Alliance to End Homelessness in their work to provide long-term, permanent supportive housing for the homeless. Homelessness throughout Jersey City is an issue we are taking seriously, and we aim to connect those in need with the resources necessary to succeed.

I am exceptionally proud to represent a city where neighborhood and community involvement plays such a crucial role, and I hope to continue collaborating to solve issues both large and small.

This year, we will work with Councilman Boggiano to revisit the Journal Square 2060 Plan with local community groups to redefine our vision for this neighborhood. We promise to be thoughtful during this process, and not simply accept the practices that were put in place by previous administrations. Just like you, we feel strongly about preserving the character of this neighborhood.

As the physical landscape of Journal Square begins to change drastically, I am confident that this neighborhood's sense of community will remain strong. We promise to protect and enhance the qualities that make this community a truly unique, and most importantly, diverse place.

Just last week, we regained the title of most diverse city in the nation. There is no better place to witness the truth of this statement than right here in Journal Square, and I am proud to work for a city that celebrates culture the way this neighborhood does. 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 values all residents.

We have made enormous strides in rebuilding a neighborhood that once was, and soon will be, the diverse epicenter of Jersey City. Yet, as a city, we have also tirelessly focused on larger, city-wide initiatives that help to strengthen Jersey City as a whole. These initiatives and programs touch on all communities, and as our neighborhoods grow in their own unique ways, we have never stopped working to build a safer, stronger, and more dynamic Jersey City.

Of these accomplishments, I am most proud of our success in expanding our public safety efforts. 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.

I am proud of the steps we have taken to grow our police force to the largest it 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 excited 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 force of 950 officers. Building a safer city begins with building a strong police

force, and I promise we will never stop working towards this goal.

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. Last 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.

Our approach to public safety is comprehensive, and we understand that providing social services to families, and especially children, within our communities is the first step in reducing, and ultimately, preventing crime.

We have prioritized recreation and youth involvement programs as a way to keep our city's students engaged after school, providing pathways to new learning experiences, chances to become involved in the community. We want our city's youth to use their time outside of school in fun, productive, and, most importantly, safe ways.

That is why we have added over 30 new recreation programs and have reappropriated our budget to include nearly \$1 million towards 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.

Our ongoing Jersey City Summer Works Initiative, which we started, is now in its fourth year. This program brings together public sector, private sector, and local nonprofits to provide comprehensive youth employment and enrichment efforts to over 1,000 students a year here in Jersey City. Programs such as this give young people in our communities a chance to explore different career paths, and learn crucial skills that will help to move them forward.

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.

Similar to our plans to convert the Pathside Building into a regional museum, we view the Sci-Tech Scity project as an important long-term investment we are making on behalf of all

residents. While previous administrations would have simply sold this land for private residential development, we believe that by turning this land into a science, technology and educational destination, we are providing current and future generations with an incredible community asset that will benefit Jersey City for many years to come.

We have made incredible investments in enhancing education overall. During the past three and a half years 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.

In addition to the newly opened Dr. Maya Angelou school, which was championed by Senator Cunningham, we look forward to the opening of two additional schools - a new public school to open Downtown in a residential housing development, and an Elementary School on Summit Avenue. This will be the second new school opened in Jersey City in decades. This pre-k through 5th grade school will educate more than 700 students from the surrounding neighborhood, and is expected to open this spring. As the demand for classrooms increases, we are excited to cut the ribbon on projects like this that prioritize our youngest residents.

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. 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 here as well.

We know that thriving communities include safe 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, and know that in the past, these valuable community assets were too often overlooked.

Last spring, 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.

We have continued to make improvements to our city's existing parks as well. Last year, we cut the ribbon on the new Pershing Field Playground, which includes new play equipment and water features. Many of you remember what the Pershing Field Playground looked like prior to these renovations, with equipment that was dangerous and unmaintained. I want to thank the Jersey City Parks Coalition for serving as partners in this process, with a special thank you to Laura Skolar for her dedication to parks and open space throughout Jersey City, and within this

community. I ask that she stand and be recognized.

This year, we will continue to make improvements to parks in Ward C, with plans to replace the playground at Pavonia Park this summer.

During the past three and a half years, we have witnessed our city change, and have experienced some incredible successes together. Whether it is citywide initiative impacting all residents, or a local issue impacting a particular community, I am proud of the work we have done together to move Jersey City forward.

Since my very first moments as mayor of this city, I have valued each of these diverse communities, and have worked ever since to make each and every resident proud to be from Jersey City.

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. 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 successes 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.