



# MAYOR STEVEN M. FULOP

requests the honor of your presence at the

2017  
*State of the City Address*  
Ward E

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

6:30pm

City Hall Council Chambers

280 Grove Street

RSVP not required. Please check [www.jerseycitynj.gov](http://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, you, the residents of this great city.

I want to start by welcoming you to the fourth address of this series, which is focused on Ward E. 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 the 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. We are making real progress on this issue. This year, we plan to expand on this success, and have committed to 600 new or preserved affordable units throughout Jersey City this year.

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.

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.

This past year, we have continued to advance our city, together.

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. Tonight, we are joined by members of two classes of recruits that are currently in the academy. I would like to thank this group for their dedication to our city's public safety, and I ask that they stand and be recognized.

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 have set a goal to grow our police force to 950 officers before 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.

It was only a few years ago that we inherited a police department that did not adequately reflect the diversity of our communities. Unfortunately, this city was ranked last in survey after survey regarding the diversity of our police department. We have come a long way since then, and I am proud that over 70% of the 250 officers we have hired since 2013 have been minorities.

Our approach to public safety is comprehensive, and not only about policing. 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. 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 since the start of our administration. Last year, we expanded recreation programming in all six wards, and began collaborating with the Board of Education to bring programming to the city's schools after hours. In addition to conventional activities, such as basketball and soccer, we now have after school programming that includes educational opportunities, engineering workshops, and homework assistance.

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

We view the Sci-Tech Scity project as an important long-term investment we are making on behalf of the city. 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.

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 expanding parks and open space a priority of this administration, and we have spent nearly \$6 million in park renovation during the past three and a half years, and have increased city-owned parkland by 11%.

We have continued to lead the charge in the fight to protect valuable open space throughout Jersey City, and specifically, in Liberty State Park. Last year, in partnership with Friends of Liberty State Park, we pushed back against Governor Christie's proposal to privatize huge portions of this park. Thanks to the united opposition of community members like you, these privatization efforts have since been abandoned, and I am proud of the success we have accomplished together to protecting this important open space.

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 our investments in public safety, education, recreation and parks citywide, 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. 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 City Hall tonight to talk about the importance of Downtown, and the commitments we plan on making over the next year to move this neighborhood forward. I lived in this community for 14 years, and I had the privilege of representing this neighborhood on the City Council for eight of them. Many of you here tonight have been friends and supporters from the beginning, and this community is one that I remain thankful to for giving me the first chance to serve.

This is a neighborhood that is full of energy, and one that has seen tremendous growth during the past few years. New buildings, new businesses and new residents are a constant here, and yet, the ways in which this community has adapted and embraced the changing nature of this city is something to be incredibly proud of. This is a community that celebrates differences, applauds diversity, and is unafraid of standing up for what they believe.

Recently, we regained the title of most diverse city in the nation, and I am proud to work for a city that celebrates culture the way Jersey City does. 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. This is why I signed an executive order last month establishing Jersey City as a sanctuary city, and we promise to continue to protect Jersey City's unified culture. No matter what happens at the federal level, we promise to protect all aspects of what has made Jersey City – Jersey City.

Yet, our shared commitment to diversity is only one piece of what makes this city, and this neighborhood, the dynamic and innovative place that it has become. The creativity that can be found here plays a major role in shaping the identity of this community, and I am proud of the work we have done to further invest in arts and culture. Specifically, I believe the work we have done to facilitate the Jersey City Arts Mural Program has benefitted this city, and this community, in important ways. Through encouraging public art, we are working to bring together residents and visitors to appreciate their surroundings in new ways, while transforming Jersey City into an outdoor art gallery that can be enjoyed by all. Since our administration started this program, we have attracted some of the most recognized mural artists in the world, from Shepard Fairey to Kobra. This incredibly diverse and talented group of artists who have shared their work with our city have done so because they view Jersey City as a place that embraces creativity in unique and exciting ways.

This program has been a huge success for our administration, and this year, we plan to revise it in order to include more valuable community input. This Friday, I will sign an Executive Order creating a Public Arts Advisory Committee to help uphold this mission. This group will make recommendations to the administration regarding proposed public artwork throughout the city.

This committee will complement the efforts of the newly formed Jersey City Arts Council, and we are excited about the level of community involvement that can be seen here. We aim to create a framework for checks and balances, in order to further strengthen our commitment to arts and culture. I would like to ask the members of the Jersey City Arts Council to stand and be recognized.

The sense of diversity, creativity, and community is also well-reflected in the small businesses that have opened throughout this neighborhood during the past three and a half years. We are proud to have become a place where small businesses thrive because of their creativity and unique qualities. Last year, dozens of new small businesses opened downtown, such as Matthew's, Lackawanna Coffee and Cellar 335. This wasn't a coincidence, but rather, it has been the result of our dedication to providing resources that our local business owner need to succeed. Through the Jersey City Office of Innovation, we created a new Office of Small Business Services to better support our local small businesses through several new funding tools.

We are excited to expand on the success of our unique business community through the creation of the new Exchange Place Special Improvement District. Currently, our waterfront is being underutilized, and has become a place that loses its energetic character once daily commuters have passed through after work. We know that by encouraging a vibrant business district here, we can expand the use of this area, and can bring in visitors from throughout the city, and the region. With its unrivaled views of the Manhattan skyline, and exceptional access to public transportation, we know that this section of the Downtown neighborhood will soon become a place that residents from all neighborhoods can enjoy. Thanks to an ordinance recently passed by the City Council, this new SID will include financial resources for programming along the waterfront as well, in order to bring new activity and new life to this area. I am confident that this initiative will transform this area of our Downtown neighborhood during the next few years, and that this district will soon become an exciting place to visit both day and night.

We know that encouraging vibrant business districts does more than simply provide local residents with a place to shop. These areas serve as important community spaces, and work to bring together residents of all types to enjoy their neighborhood together. Three years ago, our administration opened the Newark Avenue Pedestrian Plaza as an experiment to give this main street a more significant sense of place. I am excited by the life this plaza has brought into this community, and while it is not perfect, I believe it has been an incredible success. New restaurants have embraced this destination, and we have seen an increase in visitors enjoying this area as well. Over time, we have worked to upgrade this plaza in order to give it a more permanent feel, and I am proud to announce tonight that this year we will continue these important upgrades, including the addition of green infrastructure improvements and overall improved aesthetic.

We understand that that increased activity at the bars and restaurants along this street requires an increased commitment to making sure residents of this community feel safe at all times. Last week, I met with JCPD leadership to focus on a new policing strategy for Newark Avenue. We are committed to working with Councilwoman Osborne and the Historic Downtown SID to increase the presence of on-duty officers along the plaza, especially at night, and plan on taking an aggressive approach in making sure areas like this remain a family-friendly location at all hours. We know that local businesses share in our commitment to improving the safety of this plaza, and we look forward to working together on this issue.

In addition to increased police presence in our commercial district, we have made important strides in improving public safety throughout Downtown. Recently the City Council approved an amendment to the zoning around the Statco Building, which is located on the northern side of the entrance to the Holland Tunnel. This building will include 30,000 square feet to be used by the city, and will soon become home to the new East District police precinct. The current East District was built in 1891, and is long overdue for substantial upgrades. Moving the East District



from its current home on 7th street will help to relieve parking pressure on the Hamilton Park neighborhood, and will provide our Downtown officers with an upgraded facility that includes the types of cutting-edge resources we require.

Whether it is revising our mural program to include more community input, or rethinking our public safety strategies in this neighborhood, we are constantly working to adapt our policies and practices in order to keep up with our changing city.

We know that even seemingly small policy changes can have a big impact on this community and the quality of life enjoyed here. This year, we will work with the City Council and a committee of community members to amend the zone parking throughout Downtown. When these parking zones were created decades ago, the density of Downtown Jersey City was dramatically different to what it is today. We understand the struggles many of you face when it comes to parking, and I believe the upcoming changes to the current parking zone will work to solve this issue.

While a reliance on cars still remains a reality in our modern city, the most efficient cities in the nation are also focused on strategies to build more pedestrian-friendly communities. Working with Councilwoman Osborne, we have implemented changes necessary to shift the focus, including new bike lanes and improved traffic calming initiatives, such as speed bumps and stop signs. This year, we will be starting the process on building the city's first protected bike lanes, which will begin on Grand Street and be expanded to other major thoroughfares. I would like to thank BikeJC and its board members past and present for their advocacy, including Tony Borelli and Patrick Conlin, for initiating this important project, and we look forward to working together to make Jersey City more bike-friendly. I ask that Tony and Patrick from Bike JC please stand up and be recognized.

While infrastructure is crucial to building strong neighborhoods, nothing is more essential to a community than investing in the education of our youngest residents. We recently announced plans to construct a new public school Downtown in a private, residential housing development. This partnership project is the first of its kind in the state, and an example of the innovative solutions we have developed to address a growing school system. This high-rise development on Christopher Columbus Drive will include a two-story, 35,000 square foot public school that will educate students from throughout the neighborhood and ease the overflow issues at PS16. We know that this city faces a shortage of classrooms in some neighborhoods, and we are excited to address this problem at no cost to taxpayers. This project would have cost \$25 million, but we were able to achieve it at no cost by leveraging private sector solutions.

This isn't the only school our administration pushed for downtown. Working with County Executive Tom DeGise, our administration drove the expansion of the highly successful middle school, Explore 2000. This middle school gives students the opportunity to engage in crucial

STEM courses, and will help them develop skills in this growing field, while providing the tools they need to be successful.

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.

Families that have started to take root here have had the opportunity to see firsthand the investments we have made in neighborhood parks. Last year, we completed the construction of the First Street Park, which had been asked for by the community for decades. We have also recently renovated Angel Ramos Park. Neighborhood by neighborhood, we are committed to improving our current parks, and fighting for expanded open spaces, such as the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Embankment. Our administration has been relentless in its efforts to prioritize open space, like the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Embankment, and we promise to continue fighting to protect all of our most valuable resources.

We know that the work we are doing on our parks could not be possible without the work of local community organizations and groups such as the Jersey City Parks Coalition. Places like Hamilton Park and Van Vorst Park are cared for not just by the city, but in partnership with the community, and we are continually thankful for their shared commitment to these spaces. Community leaders like Jan Nordland and Marc Wesson have spent years making these places beautiful and vibrant, with events and farmers' markets, and we thank them for their work. I ask that Jan and Marc please stand and be recognized.

As an administration, there are many things that we can control, and many problems that we can work towards finding solutions to. From new stop signs to new schools, we have continued to tackle issues both large and small that will improve our city as a whole. This brings me to the final issue I would like to discuss in Ward E. By now, you are probably aware that we have been ordered by Governor Christie to perform a reval on properties throughout Jersey City. This process has not occurred for over 30 years. Initially, we objected to this reval because the prior administration had approached this process in a way that was neither fair nor transparent.

We realize that this is a complex undertaking, but I want to make one thing very clear tonight, which is that I value the investment you, as residents, have made in Jersey City. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to go about this process, and I know the fear and uncertainty that some of you have. I promise you that I will remain entirely engaged in this process, and will work to ensure that it is done properly and carefully. During the next few weeks, our administration will be hosting information sessions in each ward to offer information on this process and how it impacts residents. My priority throughout any issue facing our city, and on this issue in particular, is to make sure that our residents feel they are protected, and know that this

administration is with them every step of the way.

So, tonight, we discussed changes both large and small that you can expect to see in the next year, from updates to the Pedestrian Plaza, to a new East District, to zone parking revisions and the creation of a Public Arts Advisory Committee. We look forward to working with the Downtown community on these issues, and know that little by little, we are working together to build a better city.

However, as an administration, we have also tirelessly focused on larger, city-wide initiatives that help to strengthen Jersey City as a whole. This year, we have committed to important projects and initiatives that are occurring in other neighborhoods, including a new, regional art museum in Journal Square, the city's first municipal parking deck in the Heights, an increase in affordable housing in Bergen-Lafayette, a renewed commitment to the Loew's Theater, and a promise to hire 50 new police officers this year.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate what was stated earlier, that the success of any administration is measured by results. In this neighborhood in particular, I know that this progress can be seen everyday. 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.