

2016



STATE OF THE CITY

Mayor Vince Williams
February 16th
Benjamin Banneker High School

Are you the YOU in Union City?

Ladies and gentlemen.... It is a joy, a privilege and an honor to stand before you as Mayor---especially at such an unprecedented time. My question to you this evening is this Do you feel the energy? Do you feel the excitement? Do you feel the enthusiasm? Not just in this room, but in our country.....in our region.....and in our community... Or is it just me? I want you to look to your left and then to your right and say..... It's going to be a Great ride UNION CITY!!!!. Principal Duke Bradley and the staff of Banneker, I thank you for graciously hosting this event and for showing us that Partnership is the Only Way. My Union City Council colleagues, Mayor Pro Tem Shayla Nealy, Councilwoman Angelette Mealing, Councilman Brian Jones, and Councilwoman Christina Hobbs. I thank you not only for the sweat equity you give in pushing our community forward, but for the light of UNITY you exude as you do it. Please stand and be recognized. The City Council and I are One Body. One Team...And YES, One Family....But most importantly, we are humbled by the responsibility our voters have placed upon us, we're mindful of the critical work that stands before us, and determined to act boldly and collectively for the good of Union City. To our City Manager, Sonja Fillingame, -Please Stand-, City Clerk Jaki Cossey, -Please Stand- Our City Attorney Dennis Davenport, -Please Stand-, our Union City leadership team and staff, and each member of our various Boards and Commissions -Please also Stand-.....Thank you for helping us divide the important work that must be done in order to multiply our success. Our team is committed, from the staff performing administrative duties, answering phone calls, to those

turning the wrenches, removing litter, wearing badges, or leaving the fire stations. Because of them, our kids can play in our parks, we can drive down our roads safely, and sleep better knowing that our public safety personnel are looking out for us. I also want to welcome all elected and appointed officials who are present. Will you also stand? I must take this time to express deep gratitude to my dear wife Sharon, and our daughter Nia, who is away at school finishing up her junior year of college!!!!!!!!!!!! I thank you both for your support, your love, and for the sacrifices you have made to make my service to our City a reality. Please stand honey and be recognized! To my Sister Stacey, and her husband Andrew and my beautiful talented nieces JCKSN Avenue thanks for your love and taking time out of your busy schedule to come share your gifts with us tonight!!! And to the awesome people of Union City and everyone gathered here tonight, please know that you are our foundation. We do this BECAUSE...OF...YOU... I treasure your trust and am working hard every day to live up to the responsibilities you have assigned to my office.

.....It was one year ago that I stood before you delivering the 2015 State of the City address. I committed to you then, that we would raise the bar, relentlessly march forward, and be on fire!!! I said that we would Rebuild...Rebrand....and Revitalize this community. And today, I am pleased to report that we are doing just that. This has been a trans-forma-tive year, and ladies and gentlemen, the State of OUR City is STRONG!

Many people have asked me, What has changed in Union City? Well I'll tell you what has changed.....A lot. It seems as if it were only yesterday when we, like many communities, were facing a financial storm. For us, the recession had a domino effect. Our rainy day fund suffered. Thunder rolled down on our budget. We had to deal with the hail of declining revenues, furloughs, reorganization, and cuts. Businesses were closing, foreclosures were commonplace, and a major community asset, Shannon Mall, went defunct. Ladies and gentlemen, we needed a rainbow and we needed one fast. That's just the truth of the matter. That's exactly where we were---weathering a financial storm. But, there was no time for fear. You know someone once said that Fear,

can only stand for two things: -Forget Everything And Run - Or,- Face Everything And Rise.

We chose the latter..... And looking back, we know storms serve to teach us how to better sail our ship. ListenThe City Council and I are incredibly proud not only of what we are accomplishing but of the great adventure that lies ahead of us. I submit to you that Union City is coming into its own, changing for the better, and moving closer to a rainbow, of possibilities. We are attracting large businesses and helping our small business thrive. We are improving our streets, cleaning up our community and strengthening our fund balance. We have come a mighty long way Union City. But you know what? The credit absolutely goes to you. Because You are the You in Union City... You are the parents in this community who understand that our children's first school is called family. Because when we teach a child that he or she is loved, it's only then that they are ready for everything else. Am I right Dr. Bradley? It is essential that we partner with our schools to strengthen our children's educational opportunities. YOU are the educators at schools like Banneker and C.H. Gullatt who inspire hope and imagination in young impressionable minds. Yes....You are the You in Union City. People like Anthony Jackson with The Book Bank Foundation who raised his hand and said I want to help you clean this City, One Block at a Time. You are heroes, like James Edward Bynum who joins us tonight. James saw a fellow citizen who was driving, lost control of their vehicle, went down an embankment and ultimately ended in a pond. And like superheroes do, without giving it a second thought, he jumped in and not only rescued the driver, but the driver's son as well. James, there is a superhero in all of us...But everyone doesn't have the bravery to put on the cape. James, Please Stand! Let's give him a round of applause and thank him for not only putting on his cape that day but for being the You in Union City. People like Ivory Chevrolet's David Karangu and his team who donated a new minivan to a grandmother and the 4 surviving children who lost their parents in a tragic car crash last year. Our friends, at Christian City, Southwest Christian Care, Gary Davis of Next Level Boys Academy, James Rainer, and Jane Danko at Kreative Kidz, Chris and Sim Doughtie, Matt Ornstein, Frank Schuler, Jose Rodriguez, Scott Smith, Fred Mortensen, Tayo Reed, Derek Jackson, Sunni Patel, John Abate, and owners of all of our car dealerships, hotels, and many other business partners who could have walked away when times were hard in the City but, instead chose to stay and tough it out! You are the You in Union City.

My point ladies and gentlemen is this: All of us are the You in Union City. We are working together and we must continue to work together. We are building a better brighter community. And we are seeing tangible results. And tonight, I will share highlights of those results and a plan for what comes next.

Finance

We remain financially sound for FY 2016. This past September, the Council and I, adopted the Fiscal Year Budget in the amount of over \$35,095,669 which included \$18,137,890 for the General Fund. I am pleased to report that our financial reserves in this budget represents a 30% increase in comparison to where we were three years ago. Hats off to Finance Director Tarsha Calloway, her team, and our Department Heads for their focus on improving our budget while still providing excellent service to our citizens. I'm proud to announce the Government Finance Officers Association has once again awarded us with the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

Revenue streams are steady and collections are as anticipated. As the Finance Department implements best practices, sound financial principles and policies, we will continue to produce cost savings and focus on revenue enhancement. We are addressing many challenges this year. A critical one is our meter replacement program. Installing new, technological efficient meters is a priority and will not only help support more accurate readings, protect us and the environment from costly water loss, but also facilitate efficiency. These new meters will be able to securely transmit data and help ensure fair and equitable billing for customers. If we are going to push this City forward, we must move beyond what I call the "milk man or milk woman" approach---going door to door to read every single meter is that type of approach. To date approximately over 2,000 meters have been replaced. Water loss will now be detected quicker and more accurately, man hours will be reduced, and customer service will be elevated.

Public Works

Someone once said, “The road to success is always under construction.” And so it is in Union City. We’ve constructed sidewalks and bridges, filled potholes, paved streets, embarked upon a strong Let’s Keep U.C. Litter Free campaign, and are rolling out a welcome mat to make people proud to ring our City’s door bell.

Our Public Works Department under the leadership of Director Cedric Clark is getting the job done...Cleaning our streets, landscaping public spaces and our right of ways, preparing for emergencies and delivering key capital projects to upgrade our existing transportation infrastructure.. The Department had several accomplishments last year including: Buffington Road Bridge, Shannon Parkway CMAQ, and the Oakley Industrial Boulevard widening project. Upcoming initiatives include: Pedestrian projects, the resurfacing of SR 138 (and we all know how important that is), SR 14, and Flat Shoals Road.

I would be remiss if I did not highlight our storm water maintenance program. We are making remarkable progress in addressing issues regarding rehabilitation and infrastructure improvement, soil and erosion control, as well as education and public outreach. The City has invested approximately a half a million dollars this past year in storm water improvement alone.

Our Inflow and Infiltration project is helping us to determine if any rehabilitation is needed to the City’s sewer system. This project is already paying off dividends, and we are anticipating a savings of three quarters of a million dollars a year based on coordination efforts with Fulton County. This is true partnership ladies and gentlemen. It’s a win for the County and a win for our City. The top focal areas for Public Works will be to increase resurfacing efforts, support a TSPLOST initiative that makes sense and can BE the difference for communities like ours, and in this new economy we must pull together allowing our collective strengths to flex our economic muscle and push us towards a unified approach to transit needs by supporting MARTA, and bringing them as partners to the table of opportunity. We’ve got to invest in the future of public transportation for the entire South Fulton area, which is a huge investment in the future success of our cities, and our children. We must be champions for our communities with a designated focus on transportation.

Code Enforcement

I would like to pause and recognize the work of our code enforcement officers who are instrumental in cleaning up vacant and derelict properties.

The mission of Union City Code Enforcement Team is to protect and serve our community by enforcing local ordinances and environmental laws that ensure the safety and welfare of Union City citizens now and for future generations. Code enforcement presented over 200 court cases to our Municipal Court, removed well over 2,500 signs from the city's right of way, and implemented Vacant Property Registration, generating this year over \$12,000 in revenue. This critical department also participated in managing the metal recycling program which assisted in generating funds to be used for city beautification projects!

Hollywood is coming! And our dream city is a clean city!!! NO---MORE---LITTER. NO---MORE---BLIGHT.

Parks and Recreation

2015 was an extremely productive year for Director Lee Blitch and the Parks and Recreation Team. Our sports programs are truly making their mark in their designated leagues. Our Basketball Senior Boys took home a State Champion Trophy. The 6U Football team won The 2015 Football Championship. Our cheerleaders are dominating the league by taking home 1st place in the Inferno Spirit Cheer and Dance Georgia Blast. Our program's participant population has continued to sky rocket. This past Holiday season we were able to provide a memorable Christmas experience for a number of families within our community by giving away food and fulfilling the Christmas list of each child. Parks and Recreation didn't stop there they gave 80 bikes to children who attended school in Union City. With our partnership and support from Fulton County we will also continue to push forward our goal of promoting stellar leisure services for our seniors! Thanks to Director Blitch, there has been an overall increase in involvement and notoriety.

Economic Development

While we are working to upgrade our infrastructure, we are also continuing our focus on the City's economic development needs. In the past year, we issued 460 more business licenses. Walmart brought a 1.2 million square foot e-commerce center to the City along with close to 300-400 employment opportunities and a future investment of approximately \$108 million dollars over the next three years. Thank you Majestic Realty Company and The Rooker Company, both with developments right here in Union City! Congratulations on being presented with the Prestigious 2015 NAIOP Award! Majestic for Developer of the year, and Rooker for attaining the Development of the Year Award for their work in Union City! Let's please applaud, those are huge awards in the development community, and it causes others to look for an opportunity to be in Union City and if not, at least close by.... Equally as exciting, Green Mountain Coffee through its partnership with Exel Logistics and Amazon now also call Union City home ---helping us to further meet our goal of job creation. Just think in 2015 we were able to create over 1,200 job opportunities right in Union City alone, imagine what's about to happen on the entire South Side!!! Union City we can't say we love jobs, and hate the people who create them... And our game changer continues to be Atlanta Metro Studios of Union City! Lights....Cameras....Action.....An obsolete mall is now being repurposed into one of our state's largest film studios, Atlanta Metro Studios of Union City. The film and entertainment industry is a \$6 billion business and because we took the plunge, we're competing and contributing to Georgia's future economic strength! Ed Richardson and Brian Livesay, of 404 Studio Partners and our neighbors at Atlanta Metro Studios, as well as Karen Pope are with us tonight. Will you please stand? I cannot begin to express this City's gratitude. Not only are you and the Rooker partnership bringing jobs...good jobs....to our families....to our community....Not only are you spurring the development of supporting businesses in the film industry----because we have companies like ENON that handle movie storage props now moving to UC----.....But what many do not know is that you are taking it further by giving our young people a chance to be successful in this industry. Through a joint partnership with Union City, Atlanta Metro Studios, Fulton County Schools, and Clayton State University, students can be trained on professional equipment, orientated on the job and on film sets, and then placed on crews of independent productions. The video you saw earlier was done entirely with and by students, and I would love for them to stand and be recognized!!!! This was an artistic collaboration between our Fulton

Commented [AM1]: Cindy and I are still waiting for this number, but should have it tomorrow

County Schools and Students from the Utopian Academy... our directors are in the 6th and 8th grade and also some students from the Georgia Film Academy enrolled in the Clayton State Film Program. The City Council and I are super proud of this initiative and the fact that students from Banneker will be selected to participate is simply icing on the cake. What is changing in U.C.?....A lot... I would like to acknowledge Community Development Director Nicole Dozier for beating the drum regarding economic development and the new initiatives she and her team have been undertaking like the Union City Job Fair. Scores of employers including Atlanta Metro Studios, CBS Radio, and Walmart E-Commerce were present and ready to hire. The event garnered over 500 job seekers. So many times companies move into cities without residents benefitting and being hired by them. But the Council and I are looking for partners, not tenants. And the U.C. Job Fair was a collaborative effort between our partners and the City to give our citizens an opportunity to work for the companies who now call us home. We did it because it's the right thing to do....We did it because of the result of studies like the Livable Centers Initiative that woke us up and proved to us that only a very small percentage of residents who live in Union City actually work in Union City. We did it because of individuals like Nakia Jeter and Christopher Heath, who needed a job, came to our event, and found one in our Union City Public Works Department. Nakia, and Chris please stand, both with college degrees these two outstanding individuals have already added value to the UC Brand!!! We Welcome YOU to Team UC! It's going to be a great ride.... Despite our progress regarding economic development....Work still lies ahead. This upcoming year, we will be strengthening our marketing and promotions effort thanks to a wonderful incentive known as the Opportunity Zone. The incentive provides a \$3,500 tax credit per job created. Director Dozier and the Community development team will be reaching out to both existing and potential businesses and encouraging them to take advantage of the incentive. Additionally, we will be reviewing new ways to market and promote Union City regarding tourism and destination opportunities. The City Council and I see the spectacular possibility of creating a niche market for film induced tourism which is one of the fastest growing markets in the industry. That's that rainbow of possibilities I mentioned earlier folks. Think about it....As I mentioned the economic impact of the movie industry in Georgia is \$6 billion. Having one of the largest movie studios in the state located in U.C. gives us a seat at the table and a real chance to create a solid tourism/destination product. Union City, we no longer have to imagine. Opportunities are real and are evidenced by the brick and

mortar. All you have to do is ride down State Route 138 and look to your left.....NO---MORE---DOUBT. NO---MORE---LOST OPPORTUNITIES.

And special thanks to our Operations Coordinator Ashley Minter who is helping us craft a strong communications and events based program. Initiatives like UC Community Health Day, Pop-Up Jazz Concerts, and the Breast Cancer Awareness 5K and branding efforts like Falling in Love with UC and U.C. the Little Things, help us soar!

Public Safety

Ladies and gentlemen, under the leadership of our Fire Chief Joe Maddox, our Fire Department ran a total of 3,178 Calls for Emergency Medical Services and provided service in 909 Fire related incidents. The Department is coordinating with the Atlanta Fulton County Emergency Management Agency to update the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan and to help better protect us during critical emergencies. I commend our Chief for working to improve our City's ISO rating which can lower residential and commercial insurance premiums. The Fire Department remains committed to establishing and maintaining community involvement with programs such as Smoke Detector Programs and our in home fire safety inspections. I have turned around at many community events....many.....And, I usually find our fire services team standing in support. Thank you Chief Maddox for showing us what camaraderie looks like. Public safety is not only the primary job of a City Government, it is also the most challenging one. Whether the issue is one of national defense as we're experiencing in today's climate, or fighting crime in our neighborhoods, the City Government is responsible for keeping the people within the community safe! No matter how low your crime rate, if it's over zero, then someone has been a victim of crime. To that person the crime rate is 100%..... Interim Police Chief Cassandra Jones, -Please Stand- Welcome!, We are incredibly excited to partner with you as you bring many years of proven experience and leadership to our City's Police Department, and we appreciate your focus on helping us strengthen our relationship with our citizens. The City Council, City Manager, and I have an unwavering expectation to see crime not only go down, but the barometer of trust go up. We recognize that true community policing is how we can make this happen. It means residents getting to know our officers, and officers getting to know our residents. It means not just driving a zone but walking it, and

having conversations with those who live in our neighborhoods. And let's not sugar coat it, it means evolving and becoming an example of how to heal and move forward!

Our president may have said it best....He said, "It takes a special kind of courage to run towards danger, to be a person that citizens turn to when they're most desperate. And when you match courage with compassion, with care and understanding of the community -- -- some, really outstanding things begin to happen." Ladies and gentlemen, just like every city in America, we are a work in progress. We face challenges like everybody else. But I stand before you tonight to say that this is a time of collaboration and unity in this City. We are hope filled and action driven. NO – MORE - VIOLENCE

Why cut ribbons for new business and opportunity, if we don't cut crime and keep our City Clean?.....

Courts

I would like to take an opportunity to welcome our new Chief Municipal Court Judge Ronald Freeman---Please stand. Thank you Judge Freeman for overseeing the court with integrity, respect, fairness, and the rule of law. I report to you that the Court adjudicated over 7,915 cases in the past year. Ladies and gentlemen, I can go on and on.....But I will close by saying that the era of blocked doors of opportunity, and stunted growth are coming to a close for Union City. In its place, we are entering a period of promise and INCREDIBLE possibility. What has changed?....A lot. I choose to end this Address the way we started, and the way Union City will finish.... No Lost Opportunities in this City.....No More Violence.....No More Litter....No More Blight.....NO MORE DOUBT.....

Folks Union City is OPEN FOR BUSINESS! It's time to remove the Mayberry mindset and mentality. Union City, GOD doesn't just want us to get by, HE wants us to Prosper! GOD Bless you all, GOD Bless America, GOD Bless the Great State of Georgia, GOD Bless Fulton County and GOD Bless Union City.....

The Future Is Now!!!

Ladies and gentlemen.... It's going to be a great ride Thanks everybody.....Good night!!!