



STATE OF THE CITY

Mayor Vince Williams
February 21, 2017
Benjamin Banneker High School

TO THE NEXT LEVEL UNION CITY!

What an amazing honor it is to stand here before you tonight..... It is often said that the people who truly **know** your story are the ones who helped you write it. So as I look across this room..... As I pause to appreciate the faces who have helped us to craft a **bold, new** vision for Union City..... Those who have met us at the wonderful intersection of **hope** and **faith**..... **Hope** for an even stronger and vibrant U.C. and **faith** in the bright future at our grasp.... Friends and Family, I am thankful beyond measure.....

Principal Duke Bradley and the staff of Banneker, I appreciate you for hosting this event and most importantly for demonstrating the collective impact a community can have through partnership. There is no doubt about it.....**Strong communities deliver strong schools and strong schools deliver strong communities.** Let's give them a round of applause.

The incredible journey that brought me here tonight was not walked alone. I have the support of so very many---beginning with my wonderful wife, Sharon. Sharon, you are the air I breathe. Every day that I spend with you and our daughter Nia is the **best day of my life.** I must take this time to share the excitement Sharon and I have for **our daughter Nia,** who is away at school finishing up her senior year of college!!!!!!!!!!!! Sharon, 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, her husband Andrew, and my beautiful and talented nieces-JCKSN Avenue-, thank you. You mean the world to me!

Mayor Pro Tem Christina Hobbs, Councilwoman Angelette Mealing, Councilman Brian Jones, **Please Stand- Councilwoman Shayla Nealy**

(who could not be present tonight but certainly extends her support). Ladies and gentlemen, the **real strength** of a Mayor lies in the Council that stands with him. We are **One**. Does that reign true simply because we are on the Council together? No, it is so much deeper than that. It reigns true because we all **love** this City. We **bleed** for it.... We **fight** for it... We **live** for it.....**TO THE NEXT LEVEL CITY COUNCIL.** We have several elected officials joining us tonight. If you are an elected official, please stand so that we may properly recognize you for your support of our great City and most importantly for your dedication in advancing not only this Great County, but the State of Georgia and our Nation. Thank You for all you do! Members of our leadership TEAM, as I call your names **Please Stand** – Our City Manager Sonja Fillingame, City Attorney Dennis Davenport, Police Chief Cassandra Jones, Fire Chief Joe Maddox, Chief Judge Ronald Freeman – Municipal Court, Department Directors Tarsha Calloway - Finance, Lee Blich – Parks & Recreation, Lonnie Ferguson – Public Works, HR Manager Rhonda Jones, IT Manager Trey Bennings, Interim City Clerk Shandrella Jewett, and new to our UC Leadership Team of Professionals by two days Zachary Montgomery – Director of Community and Economic Development. Now would **all of our** Union City staff, **-Please Stand-**....Members of our Boards and Commissions-Please

also Stand.... Now, Please let's give them all a huge and well deserved applause! ...Thank you, you may be seated... Ladies and gentlemen, I will submit to you on **any day**, that this is one of the greatest Teams on earth. **Team UC**, I am absolutely inspired by you. In fact, I draw my strength in the fight for this City from you. Seeing how hard you work—whether if it's climbing underneath a pipe to read a water meter, investing in our youth at our park, protecting us from danger, or ensuring that our administrative house is in order---I appreciate you and I'm excited about our journey to the **next level. TO THE NEXT LEVEL TEAM UC!**

And to the wonderful people of Union City and everyone gathered here tonight, please know that you are our foundation. And the truth of the matter is, that there is **no - next-level** without you. Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to report that the state of Union City is extremely strong and filled with optimism and unity. We're optimistic and united because we are working together, positively, on a shared vision to improve our citizens' quality of life. And we're committed to making Union City a more livable city of opportunity for all, particularly for our children! We had a year of many successes. And I am filled with tremendous optimism for all of the amazing things to come. Truly, we have only scratched the surface.

I have spent a lot of time thinking about what I would share with you this evening. Communicating where we are is a privilege that I just don't take lightly. It is important to me to give justice to the unwavering commitment we have to resurgence, highlight our achievements, and demonstrate why we must all be relentless in unleashing Union City's incredible potential. Folks, this City was created to excel, and we must see it no other way.

So we have continued our focus **of Rebuilding...Rebranding...and Revitalizing our Community....** Yes, Union City is **open for business! And THE Future Is Now!** People are seeing us change. We have been blessed to witness milestones along our way. But there is still **so very much more** work to do.

We have strong partnerships with many leaders and organizations in the municipal government arena such the **Georgia Municipal Association, Atlanta Regional Commission, National League of Cities, and the Council for Quality Growth** just to name a few.

Collaboration is the driving force behind every success we've had in the last few years, and especially this past year.

It sounds simple, but it doesn't happen everywhere.

Washington has become paralyzed by divisiveness. While similar conflicts exist here, we flat-out refuse to get bogged down by politics or petty jurisdictional differences that would divide us.

We have chosen, instead, to spend our energy **building consensus** and **working together**. Our residents expect and deserve no less.

I am here to tell you tonight that we must continue to **believe** in Union City. Believe in its greatness. Believe in our destiny. What I want to know is do you see it like I do? Do you believe it like I do? You know some people may think that dreams like ours are only for big cities. They say, “Play it small Union City.” “Play it small”. But I believe that dreams like ours are for **every** city. And as long as we believe it.---As long as we put in the work- the **hard work**--Even a city like U.C. can “Play it big”. **So TO THE NEXT LEVEL UNION CITY!**

I submit to you that U.C. continues to come into its own, changing for the better, and moving closer to our rainbow of possibilities. We continue to attract large businesses that help our small businesses thrive. We continue to improve our streets, clean up our community and strengthen our fund balance.

Listen to me. Every single achievement we have had was preparing us for the **next level**. That's why it is truly the honor of my life to be on this journey with you. I'm deeply humbled to be your Mayor... **You** are the **You** in Union City. **You** are educators like Amina Kane and these two 4th grade Teachers of the Year **Ms. Quajulan Wimberly** who teaches at Feldwood Elementary and **Ms. Brandi Vaughn** at C H Gullatt Elementary, **they raise the** bar that ignites a fire in our young kids' minds, and helps build in them confidence, creativity, character, and dreams for greatness. Greatness. Remember? The opportunity for greatness **is for everyone---as long as you believe and put in the work**. Amina, Brandi, and Quajulan, thanks to you **our** kids don't have to play it small. - By the way ladies and gentlemen, when you look at educational facilities like Banneker.. And take a trip over to the CTE (Career & Technical Education) Center...When you see the faces of parents in this community and how all of their hopes and dreams are poured into their children, you know that UC's kids are **not made to play it small** but to rise and soar to the **next level**.

I want to also talk about grinders like Sarah Booth, who's not with us tonight taking a well-deserved vacation! Sarah, has done yeoman's work. And there are no words to express our gratitude for what she does on behalf

of the kids in this community and beyond. Sarah grew up in foster care just down the road right here, in Union City at Children's Village located in Christian City. After completing her high school education Sarah went on to graduate from Emory University's Goizueta Business School with a BBA degree in Marketing & Consulting she went on to work as a Senior Media Manager for a digital marketing agency in Atlanta. **Sarah** then decided there was more work needed to help kids and she left her job and came back to work for the Children's Village, she came back to help others.

Ladies and gentlemen, how many of us go back? **Sarah's**, passion and her work ensures that kids have a safe place to call home. She believes in healing and recovery for those in this community. So you see, you **rise by lifting others up**---**Sarah**, is the **You** in Union City. We have young future leaders like our very own Westlake High School Graduate **Janice Poe**, who is away attending Military Prep and will be entering West Point Military Academy in May of this year! As I stated Janice couldn't be with us tonight but her very proud mother who happens to be a member of TEAM UC is here with us, Jackie would you **[[PLEASE STAND]]**.....

We have partners like Commissioner Emma Darnell, and the entire Fulton County Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Darnell, would you please stand? We have a wonderful Senior services program here in UC, but I

have always dreamt of making it even better. You know sometimes a man with dreams just needs a lady with vision. Am I right Commissioner?

Thank You for being the **You** in Union City and for assisting with taking our senior services to the **next level**. We now offer meals, a computer lab, nutritional classes, a fitness center and most importantly an easy way seniors can connect and meet new friends! **TO THE NEXT LEVEL**, Commissioner Darnell. Ladies and gentlemen, they say the best classroom in the world is at the feet of a senior, they have wisdom you can't get in a classroom, sit at their feet and learn from their wisdom!

There are citizens like **Ms. Chisa Mobley** who was not afraid to speak up about her concerns regarding public housing. She was bold enough to use her voice and courageous enough to make a choice to insist on change.

Union City, whenever we stand up for what is right, it gives others permission to do the same. **Ms. Mobley**, I thank you for standing up and for helping us with our focus of rebuilding this City---and that includes repairing our existing public housing facilities. Ms. Mobley, thank you for allowing me to learn and understand your expectations regarding the revitalization of this community.

Thanks to her advocacy, we look forward to working with several stakeholders to create and launch a plan to meet our housing need through the **Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Program**.

My point continues and will always be the fact that: All of us are the **You** in Union City. We are working together in our own individual way to **rebuild, rebrand, and revitalize** ---whether it is through children, our seniors, or new or existing developments, we are on a path to not play it small—but to get to the **next level**. Let's continue to work together so that we can see even more results---

At this very moment, we remain financially sound for FY 2017. The City Council and I adopted the Fiscal Year Budget in the amount of over **\$38,000,000** which included **\$19,319,801** for the General Fund. I am pleased to report that our financial reserves in this budget represents an **81%** increase in comparison to where we were four years ago when I took office as this City's Mayor..... Revenue streams are steady and collections are as anticipated for the 1st half of the budget year. Hats off to Finance Director Tarsha Calloway, her team, and our Department Heads who operate lean without compromising outstanding service to our citizens. We can't predict the future, but we certainly can help create it, as long as we continue to demonstrate that we are good stewards of the public's trust and

its financial support through our heightened transparency and communications efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen, your support and approval of a new bond referendum to establish a state of the art multi-use community center, right here in Union City, will transform lives in ways we may have never thought possible. This time next year, we hope to unveil our new multi-purpose center---fully equipped with a theater, fully equipped with conference rooms, fully equipped with multi-purpose space, and fully equipped with an enclosed gymnasium. But most importantly, fully equipped with the voices of our children and our seniors who now do not have to drive to another community for services they can get right here at home. We are talking **next level** Union City. You see, we don't progress in isolation. We progress as a community. And having this new center means having a new landmark---a new stake in the ground that marks us----that says in this community, in this City, we believe that one of the greatest blessings on earth is the wonderful privilege of coming together. And in a world where so many things are trying to divide us, we understand that a community center is so much more than a community center. It is hope for our families. It is connection for our seniors. It is a safe place for our children. It is the **You in Union City**.

For years, our gathering space has been relegated to a neighborhood park--
-a wonderful neighborhood park----but one that alone fell woefully short of
meeting the needs and demands of participants in our system. I am
pleased to report that in addition to building a new community center we
are also updating our ballfields located near Roosevelt Highway. I
encourage you to visit the area to see our progress. New lighting. New
fencing... New dugouts. New space for a program that is busting at the
seams with kids wanting to be a **Union City Eagle**. And a whole new
level for parks and recreation. In 2016 we as a TEAM embarked on a
challenge to participate with many cities across this State in the **Active
Georgia Challenge** and we were awarded just last month **First Place** as
the most Active City in the State of Georgia!!! - **We must be champions
for our communities!**

Our Economic development must remain a city priority. Make no mistake
about it, our strength is our people but also our location. We are just 10
miles from the **world's busiest airport** and we have an incredible
amount of undeveloped land---sitting, ready to either be kept as green
space, made a residential oasis, serve as a thriving retail center, or
developed as an innovative technology hub. **The Future Is Now!**

I remember when the mall was vacant and we stood on the parking lot of that vast mammoth of a space. Vacant space that was no longer on the tax rolls. Vacant space in the heart of our community. **But we believed. We put in the work.** And now 1 million square feet of that space belongs to **DHL**, a logistical arm for **Keurig Green Mountain Coffee**. A portion also belongs to **Atlanta Metro Studios**--- the largest purpose built film and television studio in **North America**. Notice, I didn't say Metro-Atlanta. I didn't say Georgia. I didn't say Southeast. I said **North America**. Play it small Union City? I don't think so! **Greatness is for every City including Union City---as long as you believe and put in the work.** Playing it small is for the people who said it would never be so and for the people who don't believe that TV shows like **24 Legacy** starring Corey Hankins, Miranda Otto, Jimmy Smits, and Gerald McRaney airing now on FOX Monday nights, and with a release date of December 2017 for the movie **Jumanji** which was also filmed at **Atlanta Metro Studios** here in Union City. Or that Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Kevin Hart, Jack Black and Karen Gillan, and Nick Jonas pounded the pavement at the studios right here in Union City. So, how do we maximize the opportunity we have with this industry? How do we go to the **next level** in economic development? We must get out of our comfort zones. We have to

cultivate a diversified tax base that provides our residents with employment opportunities while positioning us to compete in the marketplace. With the continued rapid growth of Georgia's film industry opportunities I would also like to highlight our joint partnership with Union City, Atlanta Metro Studios, Fulton County Schools, and Clayton State University. This partnership allows students to 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 will say it again. Folks, our kids are not made to play it small. The point is this: The industry is a \$7 billion business, and because we took the plunge even more opportunities will be knocking at our door. We can now create a niche market and use it as a catalyst to assist us in getting much needed retail, restaurant, and commercial options. Atlanta Metro Studios, is just the beginning for U.C. Right Ed Richardson and Brian Livesay?

Over the past couple of years, there has been a boom of commercial growth in Union City which equates to economic mobility and opportunity, reducing income inequality. Regardless of what the negative pundits might say or have said, Union City has attracted and retained some of the largest and most notable names in the world including: **Walmart Ecommerce,**

Proctor & Gamble, GE (General Electric), Newell Rubbermaid, Caterpillar, Kellogg's, Kraft Foods, Amazon, and Google – just to name a few. We've put in the work with private developers to maintain a pro-growth reputation, while incorporating the concerns of our citizens and smart growth initiatives to mitigate the impact of development in and on residential areas. The number of jobs in Union City through these partnerships will result in an investment in smaller businesses to service the large employers, and we expect a large-scale upgrade in the abundance of new **next level** *restaurants, hotels, retail shopping, grocers, and other members of the service industry*. Given our proximity to **Hartsfield Jackson Airport**, Union City will leverage its geographic advantages to promote hospitality, new bolder retail, and higher-end office uses. Future Industrial development is likely to have larger investments, more high end jobs, and will likely be in technology and e-commerce industries-not just warehouse and distribution. We're still located in an Opportunity Zone, which is a State program (free to UC) that promotes the stronger job tax credits available in the State of Georgia, the number 1 State to still do business in for the 4th year in a row!!!!

Did you know that Audi has now chosen to call us home? Their location will add to the mix of reputable and quality dealerships in Union City.

Additionally, we will be reviewing new ways to market and promote UC as a destination for new business and tourism. Our partnership with Connect South Fulton and the ATL Airport District will take us to an entirely new level in marketing and promoting our community. – **As we move to the NEXT LEVEL there’s an undiscussed issue of a growing Homeless Population, right here in Union City that we must address by assisting others to reach the NEXT LEVEL! Government and business should and must be strong partners..... Stop thinking about politics and start thinking about people!**

Public Works had an incredible year. Led by Director Lonnie Ferguson, the department is focused and dedicated in implementing a citywide “strategic” approach for U.C... The department’s operating divisions provide responsiveness and outstanding customer service while ensuring effective operations and maintenance of existing facilities and infrastructure.

Highlights from the past year include:

- Recycling 30 tons of metal
- Repairing water leaks
- Resurfacing Lester Road & Shannon Parkway

- Resurfacing Flat Shoals Road and Stonewall Tell

We also have several projects that are in progress or scheduled to be underway soon. These projects include:

- The Citywide Street Blade Replacement Project (Have you noticed our new blades? We are **rebranding** U.C.)
- Resurfacing of SR 138 Jonesboro Road, SR 14 Roosevelt Highway, and South Fulton Parkway Projects
- SR 138 and SR 14 Landscaping and Intersection Improvement Project, which is a joint venture with the City of Fairburn
- Inspecting, cleaning, and repairing over 3,000 storm-water structures, which is critical to all communities, let me park here for a moment about storm-water. There is a Senate Bill right now **SB 116** that could devastate communities that currently impose storm-water fees. It would interfere with local control, cause severe economic impacts on local governments, it also could cause unacceptable Public Safety risk if local governments no longer have the ability to collect the fees to initiate the essential storm water management services. The bottom line is about customer equity, local governments are alone in their responsibility to manage storm-water drainage systems and operate the storm-water programs, there is no State or Federal

Government funding to assist with this important charge. Allowing a contributor to this problem to be exempt from paying a fair user fee would be grossly unfair to the remainder of paying customers and to the local government as well, and I'll be urging all of our representatives under the Gold Dome, please don't turn your backs on us!!!

Ladies and gentleman, we would also like to thank you for approving **TSPLOST**, an initiative that invests in the future of public transportation for Fulton County, including South Fulton. With the passage of the **TSPLOST** referendum we estimated that the City of Union City will receive approximately \$23.5 million dollars to fund additional transportation improvements within our community over the next 5 years, 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 must invest in the future of public transportation for the entire South Fulton area, which is a huge investment in the future successes of our cities, and our children. We must be champions for our communities with a designated by dollars focus on enhanced robust public transportation. - **Transportation is critical, people elect you to**

champion their causes for them, we've got to put a focused emphasis on connecting our neighborhoods and our people to jobs, and the amenities they deserve!

Under the leadership of Fire Chief Joe Maddox, our fire department has taken extraordinary steps to ensure that the citizens of Union City are safe from the threat of fire and other dangers. Their hard work and dedication has helped to reduce the city's ISO rating from 4/9 to a 2/2y, which could lead to a reduction in homeowner and business insurance premiums that would help many of our citizens and business owners save money. Now that's **next level**. This year, our Fire Marshall's office conducted fire safety programs at schools and day care centers located in Union City. These programs allowed us to reach over 4,000 children and over 2,000 adults through interactions at 46 community events in 2016.

It takes a courageous person to run into a burning building while others are running out of that same building, but that is exactly what Matt Doss and Terry Truman did on the morning of September 5, 2016. Firefighters arrived to a house to find a raging fire. Neighbors waited outside to alert the firefighters that a man was still inside. That is when Doss and Truman put their lives on the line and rushed into the house to find the man lying on

the steps unresponsive. The two firefighters pulled the homeowner out of the house and began to perform life-saving efforts to revive him and they were successful in their efforts. On that day firefighters Doss and Truman exhibited the bravery and sacrifice that all Union City firefighters demonstrate everyday. And that, friends, is why I am so proud of this department. - **Leadership is not leading when the wind is at your back, it's when the wind is at your front!**

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the incredible accomplishments of our Police Department over this past year. Many programs have been implemented under the leadership of Chief Cassandra Jones, and she is working hard to build bridges in our community.

The Department continued to enhance its Community Oriented Policing efforts by attending homeowner's association meetings, school functions, and conducting public education classes. Members of the Unit also attended and/or participated in seventy-five (75) public events consisting of local youth and church programs, business meetings, as well as other activities, such as the annual **National Night Out!!!**

Ladies and gentlemen, we are absolutely committed to being a leader in law enforcement and are working on new ways to engage our community.

Whether it's recruiting and retaining highly trained professionals who

understand the principals of Community Oriented Policing, embracing new technologies or increasing efficiencies to protect our community from danger----UCPD is up for the challenge. Additional highlights during the 2016 program year included:

- 3,754 written citations
- 887 warning citations
- 915 physical arrests, and
- 4,808 incident reports

Code Enforcement, a component of the police department, issued sixty-six (66) citations ranging from unkempt lawns to erosion control violations. The Unit performed 991 land disturbance inspections and 1,613 building and property inspections.

Additionally, Union City Municipal Court under Chief Judge Ronald Freeman exacted the rule of law in 2016. The Court adjudicated 7,745 cases and collected more than \$600,000 in fines and \$300,000 in probation fees
...Well I guess crime does pay after all.

Employee of the Month:

This year the City Council and I wanted to make certain the men and woman of **TEAM UC**, know without a shadow of a doubt that we appreciate them, so we implemented an employee of the month program guided by Rhonda Jones our HR Manager and our first recipient last month was **Cindy Givens** – Our Operations Coordinator... Well this month our employee of the month goes to none than **Roger Dukes** – Member of UCPD

CONCLUSION

Ladies and gentlemen, I can go on and on. But I choose to end my address the way that I started. This community was not built to “play it small”. Do you believe it like I believe it? Do you see it like I see it? I came here tonight to tell you that the state of our City is strong. And if we plan to go to the **next level**, we must continue to **believe** in Union City. Believe in its greatness. Believe in its destiny. Some may think that dreams of greatness like ours are only for big cities. They say, “Play it small Union City.” “Play it small”. But I believe that greatness is for **every** city. And as long as we believe---As long as we put in the work---we will get to the **next level**.

Former Vice President Hubert Humphrey once stated many years ago, that “The moral test of government is how that

government treats those who are in the dawn of their life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and handicapped.”

You know,,, *the Bible says: **To whom much is given, much WILL be required~***

Folks I said it before, Union City is **OPEN FOR BUSINESS** and ready for the **NEXT LEVEL!** 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 Georgia, GOD Bless Fulton County, and GOD Bless the Great City of Union City.....

TO THE NEXT LEVEL UNION CITY!!!

Thanks everybody.....Good night!!!