



THE CITY OF
UNION CITY
GEORGIA

Good evening to you all. I appreciate your attendance tonight.

I would certainly be remiss if I did not begin by thanking GOD who continues to propel the great City of Union City forward. I must thank my wife, **Sharon** -who shares my passion for public service and motivates me each and every day! A quick shout out to my daughter **Nia** who is now a college freshman! Thank you to the elected officials in attendance and especially, my fellow City Council Colleagues, who stand with me as **one team** and **one unified** body. I would like to acknowledge them by name: I would like for them to stand as I call their names! Ms Angelette Mealing, Ms. Shayla Nealy, Ms. Joyce Robinson and Mr. Brian Jones--- the City of Union City is even greater by having you in leadership. **Please join me in applauding them all....** I must also thank our Union City staff for exemplifying the word “**service**” in its truest form. Your professionalism is absolutely inspiring, and I honor you for helping us continue our unwavering goal of bringing out the **very best in U.C.** And thank you, foremost, to the People of Union City for **entrusting us** and holding us **accountable** to the charge of governance.

Our purpose this evening is clear; to discuss the state of our city, encapsulate our accomplishments, and bring forth the vision that will help us ensure a bright and sustainable future.

Paramount to this administration is a focus on **excellence**. As Aristotle once said, **WE ARE (PAUSE) WHAT WE REPEATEDLY DO (PAUSE)**. Ladies and gentlemen, the people of Union City expect and deserve **excellence**. And because our core values must form a nexus with their expectations, we must **carte blanche**:

- Embrace, be an example of, and lead a **transparent** and **open** government
- Dedicate ourselves to the level of fiscal discipline needed to **improve** and **sustain** our local economy
- Forge through our challenges with a cooperative spirit and with the full knowledge that if we edify Union City, we in turn, edify Fulton County, edify the State of Georgia, and edify America. Ladies and gentlemen, we cannot address our challenges alone. We must work together.

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I compel you to take a journey with me this evening, as I share with you where Union City is NOW (Pause), as well as the direction **we must continue traveling** in order to be a City of growth and opportunity.

Chief among our responsibilities is **fiscal stewardship**. Our citizens hold us accountable and want to ensure that tax dollars are spent wisely. Hence, the vision for a brighter UC must be driven by **tough** financial choices. These choices will not be easy, but they will be absolutely **necessary**. **Yes**, they will be **absolutely necessary**, if we are to ensure that future generations thrive. Ladies and gentlemen, we want to be a city **without** limits and fiscal stewardship has to lead the way.

It is no secret. The economic climate has been hard on many jurisdictions, and Union City is not an exception. But **make no mistake about it**, we are meeting this challenge head on.

I am pleased to report that we are making substantial progress. During the FY 2014 budget process, we were confronted with a major shortfall and faced with raising the millage rate for the first time in approximately 20 years. We had to adopt an **even stronger** and **tighter** position of making sure that financial activities were **justifiable, effective, and accountable**. We **raised the bar** and are working hard to protect our assets, plan for long-term financial stability, and replenish the City's reserves.

Cost savings is our mantra. In anticipation of budgetary short falls, individual departments were asked to reduce expenditures and did so without excuses, which resulted in the City decreasing expenditures by approximately \$800,000.

This includes savings from departmental cuts and salary costs through positions that were primarily frozen or eliminated as a result of the closure of the South Fulton Municipal Regional Jail.

We were posed with a 47% increase in the cost of our healthcare program. Renegotiation with providers and reassessment of benefit options was paramount and landed us with a total savings from the original renewal amount to the final renewal amount of approximately \$400,000.

The City Council and I are proud to affirm that we have received the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report Award which is an exceptional accomplishment realized through our independent annual audit.

We continue to make financial progress---though we are mindful that the economy has not made a 100% recovery. Vigilance in our financial reform and execution of cost saving strategies will abound **as we go about the business of bringing out the very best in U.C.**

Access to quality education is paramount to our growth. We must support our school system through partnership and so that children in our community can attain their highest academic goals.

I am proud of the progress that schools in the Union City area have made over the past several years, specifically our three high schools: Banneker, Creekside and Langston Hughes. Each school is focused on increasing graduation rates and preparing students for both college and careers, and this focus is beginning to show impressive results. Banneker HS has made tremendous progress in preparing students for college. Last year the percentage of students who scored ready for college on the SAT more than doubled – an increase of 17 percentage points. Langston Hughes HS has seen tremendous progress in their graduation rate over the past two years, increasing by 11.2% last school year. During this past year, Creekside lowered its dropout rate to an all-time low of 4.4%. While we know there's still much progress that needs to be made, the student achievement data for all three schools is certainly trending in the right direction. Union City will remain committed to our Summer High School Intern program and I have directed our City manager to now include College Interns this year as well....

Public Works initiatives and infrastructure investments remain a priority for the City. We must continue to deliver key capital projects to upgrade our existing infrastructure.

In September of last year, the City was triumphant in hosting a ribbon cutting ceremony for the High Point Pedestrian Bridge project. This was a flagship project supported by many community leaders and the State Department of Transportation. Additional initiatives either complete or substantially complete include: MARTA improvements at the intersection of Roosevelt Highway and High

Recreation is a critical component to a healthy and prosperous Union City. Citizens rely on our recreational programs for many important benefits.

Under the direction of Lee Blitch, Parks and Recreation, we have moved forward with our goal of promoting stellar leisure services.

The City's football program was very successful this past year. Our 9 Year old team won their division championship and was invited to compete in a nationally ranked competition. The youth softball program had more than 100+ plus participants, and we introduced a new program, track. Over the past two years we've acquired more than 700 acres of land that will be utilized for passive recreational opportunities enhancements, which once completed shall provide more much needed park space, biking and walking trails, possible skate park just to name a few

This was the year for Cheerleading. Parks and Recreation had 100+ active cheerleaders, competed in several competitions, and won more than 15 trophies.

Our continued partnership with First lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move Initiative is vital for our children's sake!

Let's Move! is a comprehensive initiative, launched by the First Lady, dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation, so that children born today will grow up healthier and able to pursue their dreams. Combining comprehensive strategies with common sense, *Let's Move!* is about putting children on the path to a healthy future during their earliest months and years. Giving parents helpful information and fostering environments that support

healthy choices. Providing healthier foods in our schools. Ensuring that every family has access to healthy, affordable food. And, helping kids become more physically active.

Everyone has a role to play in reducing childhood obesity, including parents, elected officials from all levels of government, schools, health care professionals, faith-based and community-based organizations, and private sector companies. Your involvement is key to ensuring a healthy future for our children.

Adult fitness classes in Yoga, Aerobics, Zumba and Circuit Training were offered during the year for adults. Additionally, Union City formed its first softball team for women ages 55+. A total of 15 women ranging in age from 62 to 75 years participated.

Other activities for 2013 included **Youth Karate** classes, **winter dance camp**, our annual **Fall Family Fun Festival**, **Movies by Moonlight**, and **Easter Egg Hunt**.

The mission of Union City Code Enforcement 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.

Presenting over 200 court cases in Municipal Court

Removing over 2000 signs from city's right of way

Implementing Vacant Property Registration, generating over \$12,000 in revenue

Managing Metal Recycling Program, resulting in over \$2,000 for beautification projects

Planning- Community and Economic Development

Community and Economic Development will be a key factor as we continue to move forward. As I shared with many of you just a few weeks ago a 177 year old company has decided to move in and become a part of the Union City family and that company is Proctor & Gamble. They will house an over 1million square foot warehouse that will be responsible for well over 500 jobs after it's completion later this fall. This is huge for our economy and it will cause a ground swell of future opportunity in our city, in our county, in our region, and certainly in our state. We are just getting started Union City! Let me share more great news with you tonight before I close, remember you heard here before the media gets it.. Many have asked this question time and time again "What's happening with the Mall?" Well, The Union Station Mall has been purchased by Rooker and this will be an absolutely fantastic venture for our City with our proximity to the interstate and the airport the Union City economic engine is revving up for extreme growth and potential. Rooker's purchase of this property is a monumental win for Union City The City Council and I have been championing the redevelopment of this area for quite some time, affirming to the people of Union City that the property would certainly rise again.

The presence of new industry coupled with many more job opportunities and future retail is evidence that Union City is open for business and that our economic development strategy is working. A vacant piece of property will be back in business, on the tax rolls and generating revenue. We welcome Rooker with open arms and are grateful for their partnership."

Companies that have recently established manufacturing or distribution operations in Union City include Dendreon, which opened a \$70-million

biotechnology production facility, and Kraft Foods, which established a \$60-million, 1-million-square-foot distribution center. The two facilities have created more than 400 jobs in Union City. Other major employers in Union City include Wal-Mart, Newell Rubbermaid, Nissan of Union City and Universal Forest products.

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 Union City, GOD Bless Fulton County, GOD Bless the Great State of Georgia, and GOD Bless America...

THNAK YOU!