

**2023 State of the City –RETURN OF R3 (THE SHIFT)  
Mayor Vince Williams  
City of Union City “Gospel Choir?”**

**Serving/Service**

**My Hallelujah Belongs to YOU!!! Worthy is the LAMB!**

Wow! Leonard Julien III, ladies and gentlemen! Let’s give him a round of applause one more time! All of the talented musicians for this evening, thank you for being here! Thanks to an Atlanta media treasure, the Silky Voice of Ms. Twanda Black and our Red-Carpet Personality Ms. Nia Imani Williams thank you. Thanks to my good brother and friend for lending his talents this evening opening our program the “Honorable Commissioner Kentaiwon Carter Durham.” Please let’s thank our babies from **Liberty Point** and **C. H. Gullett** Elementary Schools for the Pledge of Allegiance. To all of our generous partnership sponsors – I humbly thank you. *The bible says: To whom much is given, much will be required (Luke 12:48). If you have heard that line of wisdom, you know it means we are held responsible for what we have. If we have been blessed with talents, wealth, knowledge, time, and the like, it is expected that we benefit others.....*

**HOW ARE YOU DOING UNION CITY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!** **“Wait for Audience Response”** That’s what I like to hear! Thanks everyone for joining us tonight. Look, I want to start by thanking a few people. 1st Banneker’s Drum Major: Principal Dr. Jason Stamper, (Congratulations, Dr. Stamper! FCS Middle College Principal!) thank you sir for your hospitality AND YOUR COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION while ENSURING OUR

CHILDREN THRIVE!! You will continue to change the lives of so many students! Selfless Service, This is beautiful and we are so absolutely proud to be in the house of STAMPER!!!!

I want all of you to know, that everyday I thank GOD for allowing me the distinct honor and humble pleasure to serve as the 20th Mayor of this GREAT CITY. (Who knew this little boy from Memphis would one day be your Mayor...)? **GOD did! The MAYOR of the Great City of Union City.**

**Since 2020, we have been in the grips and midst of a global pandemic, but we made a promise to you, the citizens of Union City. We made a promise to bring prosperity and growth. I'm here tonight to tell you that our piece of the promise is certainly coming to fruition here in Union City, right now! And I want to make a public declaration that "The state of Union City is extremely strong!" We are looking forward to a bright future. A future that brings our community together in a way that has never been witnessed before.** It is with pleasure that I stand before you tonight as we begin to **"SHIFT" "sound effect"** our city forward! I am immensely proud to be joined tonight by our dynamic Union City Family.

As Mayor, I have the responsibility of navigating THIS Phenomenal CITY!! Look, I depend heavily on the support and advice of the members of our City Council. There's nothing that could be done in our city without the collaborative teamwork and guidance of these amazing leaders. Family, please stand as you are recognized... Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Christina Hobbs, Councilwoman Angelette Mealing, Councilman Brian K. Jones, and Councilwoman Dr. Lawanna Owens-Twaites. This group of outstanding individuals truly LEAD Together,

with respect and love. I want to thank each of you, truly ... for the tireless work that you do on behalf of ALL of our citizens and for harvesting the firm foundation for which we stand today. "When spider webs unite they can tie up a lion." **Please be seated!**

The work that government officials do is often tireless and thankless. And in Union City, we are fortunate to have time-tested Leaders who inspire us to continue to **"SHIFT" "sound effect"** Union City in a positive direction. This leadership team has a desire to see Union City succeed and thrive! To the best, and I mean this with every fiber of my being, the absolute BEST City Manager ever. You know her as **Ms. Sonja Fillingame, I know her fondly as The Velvet Hammer.** Assistant City Manager Ms. Tarsha Calloway, **she keeps the lights on...** Chief Municipal Court Judge Ronald Freeman, City Attorney Dennis Davenport, and members of the Union City Senior Leadership Team, will you please stand? Please give this dynamic group of leaders a hand. **Please be seated!!**

**I thank you for all that you do to move our city forward.**

My colleagues on city council, our administrative team, nor our senior leadership, can **"SHIFT" "sound effect"** our city anywhere without the hard work, dedication, and commitment that the almost 300 members of our Union City Team brings each and *every* day.

I certainly wouldn't be standing here today... as the man that you see before you... Without the light of my life. My eternal flame. The woman who challenges me to not only be a better

husband, father, and servant, but a better individual...Folks, the rhythm of my heartbeat! My beautiful wife, the First Lady of Union City, Sharon Williams! Stand up honey and be recognized!

After all these years, she still makes my heart flutter. I'm still in love with you. I ask you to extend a warm welcome please again to our daughter, Nia Williams, who has done an awesome job tonight on the red carpet, you always make me proud! She will always be my baby girl, but I want to thank her, for her continued support to me throughout my endeavor to make Union City a welcoming place for all, she was raised right here in Union City, and UC will forever be in her heart! I am the man I am today because of the love these two phenomenal women give me, and I will forever be thankful for this blessing.

Members of Union City's authorities, boards and commissions, please stand and be recognized at this time... These leaders play an important role in the "Shift" "**sound effect**" of what we do and how we do it...

Let's not forget about our federal, state, county, local elected and appointed officials who have chosen to join us this evening, please stand and be recognized at this time. We are deeply honored to have you spend this time with us.

As I stand here, I am reminded that the heart of a school are teachers, and teachers should be recognized. Besides parents, teachers help fertilize our children to grow with knowledge, moral values, and inspiration to become successful adults and responsible citizens. It is with my distinct pleasure to recognize some amazing teachers and professionals of the year.

**Teachers of the Year- Liberty Point Elementary School Ms. Carson Kelly and – C.H Gullatt Elementary School Ms. Shatori Bland**

**Professionals of the Year- Liberty Point Elementary School Ms. Stephanie Lockhart (She is pregnant and unable to attend) and C. H. Gullatt Ms. Patricia Spirling**

Thank You for your dedicated service!

Beatty Team - acknowledge partnership with Atlanta Technical College and Dr. Victoria Seals- **Proclamation**

Literacy Program- Through our Partnership with the Georgia Municipal Association's Georgia City Solutions we embarked on The Mayor's Reading Initiative -----

Last year, we introduced you to our innovative R3 Master Plan: Reclaim, Renew, and Reimagine. Union City's Master Plan is a practical and inspirational framework for meeting and changing the City's landscape for recreational needs and interests. Transforming Union City into a sustainable, flexible, and innovative City requires continued investment and commitment from residents – that's all of you, employees, and the City leaders now and in the future. The R3 Master Plan aligns with Union City's vision to achieve the shared citywide goals of sustainability and resilience, equity, livability, and connectivity.

As you saw in the magnificent video our team created, together we are **SHIFTING**.....we will continue planning for the future, investing in infrastructure, improving our processes, and facing all challenges head on. I am feeling confident as we enter 2023, knowing we have survived and continue to *thrive-through* a GLOBAL PANDEMIC. Union City continues to flourish even through the most difficult times, not a small feat by any measure! As Mayor, I am looking forward in anticipation as we work together with our residents, community partners, businesses, and other elected officials to ensure every person will have an opportunity to become a contributing member of OUR community.

**Where we've been????**. Let's take a moment to reflect and see where we've been as we lift our eyes to the broad horizon and set our sight on where we are going, because none of us can get there alone! Let's ensure we revisit where we have been. We know that Union City is on the move.... we are **THE FASTEST** growing city in Fulton County. According to the US Census, Union City has grown by 40% in the last 10 years. This substantial increase demonstrates a desire that proves people want to reclaim, renew and reimagine their future in Union City. **Folks, we are on the move!!!**

## **In the area of FINANCE**

We are **SHIFTING** the **financial** landscape through healthy investments, grants, and strong financial stewardship under the leadership of **Mr. Francis Harley**.

Our City cannot grow and be a livable community without a strong financial position. We can't make all the necessary changes to Union City, if we're broke with bad credit! Our

finance department has implemented sound policies which are working in our favor!

Our annual budgets as well as our reserves have been steadily increasing for the past five years, something that is very hard to do but TEAMUC makes it happen! Our current general fund and city-wide budgets are “\$39,141,251 and \$169,641,375” respectively. The department has worked diligently to attain “Aa2 bond” rating which is the **BEST** bond rating for the city EVER, which means a lower borrowing (interest) cost for the City. This is also good news for our citizens because due to this upgraded rating, we can make improvements without impacting your taxes. So, don’t worry those new parks and street projects won’t impact your tax bill, I know that’s something that makes me and the City Council feel better about all of these improvements!

During this fiscal year, the City was able to acquire \$18,615,000 for the purpose of constructing a greenway trail system, fire station, streetscapes, turf replacement, splash pad and many other exciting projects listed in the R3 Master Plan.

### **Grants:**

When planning our projects, the grants department, led by **Nydia Akins** our Grants Manager, helps “SHIFT” “sound effect” the financial burdens from our taxpayers, so make sure to show some love to Nydia next time you see her! I’m honored to announce that we’ve received over 1.5 million dollars in grant funds for our first responders and capital improvement projects including a vibrant new walking trail.

Our city's vision is to create active spaces for everyone to enjoy, that means you, your children, mama, and your auntie. The walking trails will be a place where residents can come together

to exercise, connect with nature, and spend time with family and friends.

This trail will provide a much needed recreational amenity for those who live, work, play, and stay in Union City. It will be a space for all ages and abilities, making it a true community asset. It is our hope that this trail will encourage people to get outside, get active, and appreciate the beauty of our community.

## **Public Services**

The R3 masterplan emphasizes beautifying our streetscapes and public spaces. As I speak about the beautifying of our community Public Services, led by the one and **only, Ladies love...Lonnie Ferguson**, has been instrumental in protecting, the health, safety, and welfare of the residents. This includes maintenance and enhancements of the city's infrastructure.

We have created a utility management system to effectively support a fast-growing city and to maintain aging water distribution, wastewater, and Stormwater systems. As a result of our annual maintenance and inspections, Public Services has replaced 70 water service lines, and repaired 225 reported water leaks citywide. The Department has established a Sanitary Sewer Flow Metering Monitoring Program for detection of "Inflow and Infiltration" (I&I), a continuation of our meter replacement program, and bi-monthly and quarterly drinking water sampling analyses. We want to and must make sure our City is on top of these critical elements!

The Public Services Department is heavily responsible for the city's 114 miles of street. Daily operations **include grass maintenance, litter control, traffic sign installation and replacement, pavement markings, and minor street pothole**

**repairs. (list of upcoming street projects) These are locations that you will soon see improvements, but please know this is just the immediate short list! Highpoint RD. - Majestic Place - Mason RD. - Shannon PKWY (2 Locations) - Mall BLVD and Oakley Industrial Blvd (Near Dendreon & Safelite) just to name a few!!!**

Litter control has been a **critical** component in our maintenance program. Litter and illegal dumping has a negative impact on our community. **FOLKS THIS HAS TO STOP!!!!** It is **OUR** Union city and we have **ZERO TOLERANCE** for the blatant disrespect. This is an issue that is near and dear to me, this is where we **LIVE.....WORK...PLAY...and plan to continue to STAY!** WE are shifting the look of our community and that does **NOT** include litter.

### **Hiring Seniors for our “Trash Patrol” (Maybe)**

Union City continues to take steps in addressing litter such as the Semi-Annual Spring & Fall Cleanup, A **FREE** service for all of Union City’s residents to unload unwanted household items. These programs **work**, just last year **in total 72, tons of trash was collected, 7,596 pounds of metal was recycled, and 253 tires recycled from around Union City.**

When it comes to keeping Union City beautiful, everyone has to do their part. Our Adopt-A-Spot and Litter Campaign Programs were created to elevate and maintain a high level of cleanliness in and around the Business District through community partnerships. We would like to thank our partners for participating: **Arby’s, Walgreen’s, Steak n Shake, Corner Café, Coca Cola United, Union City Police Department, Union City Fire Department, City Hall Staff, Music Greeks, Wells Fargo, and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.**

You can't mention improving the overall quality of life without including the Capital Improvement Program. This program includes the City's long-range multi-year planning instrument that provides an evaluation and identification of larger construction and areas of improvement.

Let's start off by highlighting some recently completed projects, including resurfacing Lower Dixie Lake Road, Oakley Road and Dodson Road among others. We've recently completed the Multi-Use Path at Christian City, which serves as the beginning of our Multi Use Trails project, so get your walking shoes on, UC!!! Through the support of Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, also known as TSPLOST, Federal, State, and County grant opportunities, we can continue to support these projects.

Ladies and gentlemen, please excuse our mess as we have several projects underway or currently in construction. This includes The Roosevelt Highway Street Streetscape Improvement Project Phase I, Oakley Road Sidewalk and Drainage Improvement Project, Londonderry Way Streetscape, Buffington Road Resurfacing and Streetscape, and more.

Public Services has a major role in executing Union City's R3 Master Plan with the vision of expanding and improving parks and open spaces, creating a walkable mixed-use footprint, improving and expanding public infrastructure, and providing additional amenities throughout the city. With the help of our partners, the vision to transform Union City into a destination for years to come.

I would like to say thank you to our Engineering partner Atlas Technical Consultants, LLC.

Public Services is SHIFTING gears in 2023 with the beginning of the Union City Pedestrian and Cyclist Greenway Trail, Fire Station Headquarters, splash

pad, and additional parks coming to South Fulton Parkway and McClure Road, and the Veterans Park at Royal South Parkway. Public Services' impact on the welfare and quality of life are not only for the citizens, but for employees of Union City. By performing building assessments and routine maintenance, Public Services strives to improve and enhance the functionality of the City's facilities. This includes the installation of LED fixtures and utilizing sustainable materials and products.

## **Parks and Recreation**

We are **RECLAIMING PARKS AND RECREATION FOLKS**, and we couldn't do that without **Director Coach Lee Blich!!!!** This year has been truly a year of rebirth. As many of our COVID restrictions have been relaxed, many in our community have really shown that they are **EAGER** to get back to activities in parks and with recreation. Our Parks and Recreation team is more than ready and prepared.

We have seen increases in numbers by 20% in all of our youth sports.

We are at maximum capacity for our gymnastics and karate programs. In addition, our youth mentoring program has also seen a significant increase in participation. This sudden rise in outdoor participation has **SPARKED** the creation of new programs such as the chess club and youth soccer.

In collaboration with creative partners such as The High Museum and South Fulton Institute our community centers have become a hub for arts and cultural activities.

Our senior resident's program has been **RENEWED** for 2023 with exciting programs such as gardening, walking club, jewelry

making, quilting club and so much more! As we move into 2023, we are expecting more programming opportunities for our senior population. When I say the Gathering Place has programs for all ages... **I MEAN ALL AGES... In a partnership with our friends at Comcast and the amazing Lisa Walker-Holloway we were able to bring seniors of our community into the age of technology with over 100 laptops plus training provided by the Urban League of Greater Atlanta. We are now a designated Lift Zone which provides internet connectivity at community centers and other public facilities allowing adults and our children to get online while shifting the digital divide.....**

We saw a dramatic increase in our Zumba and line dance classes. Our fitness room has seen a HUGE increase in the number of participants. We are seeing more local groups take advantage of using the auditorium for community events.

We held special events such as the book bag giveaway, fall festival, and Mother's Day paint party.

**WE** will continue this **SHIFT** in our programming to include skateboard lessons at our Skate Park, increase theatre activities, and cheer competitions. We will continue to look for new and innovative ways to provide excellent recreational programming.

### **City Clerk**

In addition to Parks and Recreation focus on our youth programming. The Clerk's office provides a great leadership program for our youth. The Youth Leadership Council Program started in 2018 and is designed to prepare tomorrow's leaders today. Youth Leadership allows us as **LEADERS** to educate

young adults on civic responsibility, the structure, and roles of city government, developing communication skills, and cultivating leadership skills.

### *Please stand YLC*

Each year our youth participates in several educational, networking, and volunteering events. These conferences provide youth a structured curriculum where they learn government policies and procedures, communication, critical thinking, and leadership skills. The conferences also give the youth the opportunities to meet members of local and state government officials.

The City Clerk's Office also serves as the steward of historical information and are the administrative backbone of this great city. Our **City Clerk Shandrella Jewett** supports the citizens of Union City, the Mayor and Councilmembers, and all city departments by ensuring compliance and transparency with records. Thank you so much for your hard work and commitment to Union City and its residents.

### **Community Development**

We are **SHIFTING** the landscape of Union City by bringing exciting new commercial and residential developments under the leadership of Director Anthony Alston. We are truly and effectively developing communities to live, work, play, and stay in!

The Community Development department bears professional witness to the great changes happening in our city. We have

exciting new projects happening in the city that clearly illustrate the growth and direction that we have waited so long to see. We are excited to see more multifamily and single-family subdivisions being built with our main interest being attracting young adults and couples looking to start their families and what better place than the great city of Union City. Since our last State of the City, our Community Development department has issued more than 650 building permits and counting.... We are growing ladies and gentlemen! With the anticipation of exciting developments such as the new Mercedes experience breaking ground....to the approval of permits for our very first Starbucks. Union City is on the move!

(With their partnership, the development of the Mercedes-Benz Atlanta South project that was announced at the end of 2022- one that will SHIFT the landscape of Union City. I simply say to a GIANT of a MAN!!!

### **Jim Ellis “Yes We Can!” .and “Yes We Will!”**

Our Community Development department has been busy at work ensuring we have quality development through engagement and collaboration with developers, citizens, and other stakeholders. There have been updates made to our ordinances and regulations that will guide equitable and quality development with many more ordinance updates to come!

Pendleton Consulting Group continues to serve as our Economic Development partner for Union City. They have assisted us during this past year in all things Economic Development, and we look forward to our continued partnership.

## Courts

In 2022, the Court Services department RENEWED their focus on post pandemic access to justice. I am PLEASED to report that after 2 years of closure, **Judge Ronald Freeman**, and **Court Administrator Kristie Tucker** along with our Court Services team worked hard to successfully eliminate the pandemic back log. We continued the use of our virtual court initiatives, providing the option to those who live outside of Union City. Additionally, we enhanced our alternative sentencing efforts by partnering with city departments, allowing the option to work off fines through community service and through our junior bailiff program.

In 2023, we are committed to growing the use of the UC Community Resource Center and making Court Services more of a community resource. Union City is the only location to host the teen distracted driver course and we are proud to lead the way in South Fulton. We will also continue to develop our specialty courts including probation revocation, environmental, and youth court calendars as planned for 2023.

## Police:

Union City Police Department, under the leadership of **Chief Cassandra Jones**, is “**SHIFTING**” “**sound effect**” how we reimagine 21st century policing.

With an emphasis on trust and transparency, we understand the importance of this in community policing. We have entered into various partnerships within our community. In 2019, we began participating in the Georgia Chief's Police State Certification process. This program requires that the Union City

Police Department implement best practices, standards, and policies. We boldly took on this challenge, and we were successful. I am pleased to announce that our Union City Police Department has obtained recertification with the State of Georgia. We not only talk the talk but we walk the walk. When we shift our perceptions, our experiences begin to change.

New leadership with fresh perspectives was put in place to continue the evolution from traditional style policing to community-based policing. Community Policing allows for greater flexibility. Innovative new programs such as *Lunch with a Cop*, *Breakfast with a Cop*, *Books and Kids (where our officers read to the class)*, *Cops with toddlers* and *Cocoa with a Cop* have been well received by our community partners. We continue bridging the gap through initiatives such as **Shop with a Cop**, **National Night Out**, and **Union City Citizen's Police Academy**.

### **Gun violence - Thought**

Law Enforcement and Code Enforcement go hand in hand; if your neighborhood looks like you don't care, people will treat it that way. What can we do to SHIFT that mindset? In collaboration with other city departments, our Code Enforcement and Police Department participated in **Adopt a – Spot, Point in Count, and community clean-ups** events that will enhance beautification within the city.

The traffic unit continues to provide visibility and enforcement in reclaiming our streets for the safety of our citizens. Our Criminal Investigation Division continues its commitment to victims of crime by engaging and focusing on responsiveness. Folks let's look at the numbers: The Code Enforcement

**unit inspected 2,779 properties and issued 1,235 violation notice.** The police department issued **4,990 citations, 7,455 incident reports,** and **made 888 physical arrests.** **The Police Department continues to be engaged in the community by attending more than 100 community events.**

## **Fire**

The R-3 master plan created a positive SHIFT in the operational structure of the Union City Fire Department through 94 years of combined experience amongst the department leadership team under **Chief “babyface” Joe Maddox.** The operational structure once had the chief and assistant chief as the department lead. The new structure allows for closer monitoring of department functions.

The Union City Fire Department had a busy year in 2022, with a total of 8,052 calls for service which encompass 4,158 EMS calls and 3,894 fire related calls. These numbers represent an increase of 7.54% calls for service from 2021.

The Fire Prevention Division was also busy with inspections, fire safety classes and community events. They conducted 879 inspections, installed 89 car seats and 128 smoke alarms. One of those alarms was a bed shaker, a device for a hearing-impaired individual. That is where the R-3 has caused a shift in our approach to community outreach. We have shifted to an all-community approach to make sure the needs of all the citizens are met, including those with sensory impairments. The Prevention division also performed 110 plan reviews. And conducted 5 fire investigations. Fire Prevention held nearly 40 community events which included the Annual Chili Cook off, the Holiday Fire Safety Event and car seat and smoke detector

events. Deputy Chief Knowles and volunteers many of whom are firefighters prepare weekly meal for less fortunate individuals. Through their efforts, they were able to interact with over 4,000 individuals.

The fire department is looking forward to continued growth with the planning of a new fire station, which will provide quicker responses and help in lowering the city's ISO rating..... This rating is used by insurance companies when setting insurance rates. The fire department was able to purchase new Self-Contained breathing apparatus, a new med unit and three administrative vehicles.

The department also completed departmental training and training with our automatic aid partners that that totaled 32,704 hours.

We were fortunate enough to celebrate the retirement of one of our own, Sergeant Jeff Forsyth. Sergeant Forsyth retired in December with over 37 years of service to Union City's citizens. That is to be CELEBRATED.

**Employee of the Month: - Sgt. Jay Duhon**

## **Tributes**

“Our Union City family suffered a tremendous loss with the passing Fire Department Sergeant Craig Underwood and Police Officer Rodney Steed. Sergeant Underwood “lost” his battle to cancer in **August of 2022**. He fought a hard fight for over a year during this time he was steadfast in his beliefs and fought hard to the end. He is deeply missed by all in the fire department.

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Officer Rodney Steed succumbed to injuries from an off-duty vehicle accident. Officer Steed joined Union City Police Department in 2017. Officer Steed was assigned to our Court Services Division having previously served in the United States Military with full retirement and retiring from DEKALB County Sheriff's office with 20 years of service. His passing is a tough loss for all of us. His spirit and continual laughter remain an integral part of our daily lives serving and protecting the citizens of Union City." His family has had close ties to UC for many years. "Is Chairlady Harrell here????"

*"Moment of Silence" Mr. Jim Ellis 11/5/2022*

*Freshman Representative Tish Naghise 3/8/2023*

## **Human Resources**

Our HR Team led by **Brittany Sainnatus** **"(Sa -not- us),"** continues to work diligently to recruit and hire the best talent in not only the region or the state but across the country.....Our team has many responsibilities such as payroll, benefits, and performance management; however, their greatest responsibility is to attract and retain talent that will aid the city in achieving our R3 master plan and serve our citizens. In 2022 Union City on boarded **62 new employees, promoted 22 employees, and hired 6 interns.** We are extremely proud of our internship program that has been in place for over 12 years and continues to provide opportunities for Union City youth to learn about local government.

"We have partnered with the Beatty team to provide opportunities and workplace development for young adults and active job seekers through our UC Champions initiative....."

Last year, the City provided employees with a salary adjustment. This adjustment not only ensures Union City Employees have a livable wage but also helps us maintain competitiveness in the job market. The HR team remains active in local career fairs and have already began preparing for this year's UC Career Fair. Union City prides itself in creating a well-rounded work force which focuses on training, employee wellness, and recognition. The City's programs are designed to ensure employees bring their best self to work, physically and mentally. In 2023 HR is making **a shift**, putting the R3 master plan in **full motion**. Union City is making the shift to being a Premier Employer and elevating the overall employee experience.

## OPERATIONS

The City's R3 Master Plan does not happen without the logistical planning and collaborative spirit of our Operations Department, led by **Director Cindy Givens**. Director Givens, you know how I feel about you!

Union City has introduced a variety of art initiatives for its residents. Our community art show, The Creative Exchange: Visual Stories of Local Artists, elevates inclusiveness and celebrates the work of area artists with diverse social and cultural backgrounds. This quarterly art show provides the local community a unique opportunity to display their work in a relaxed but professional setting where many artists may be first-time exhibitors. We have also installed our first-ever public art project featuring hand-painted trains by students, residents, and staff. Additionally, our new "I [Heart] UC" statues can be seen in front of City Hall and the Hwy 29 Ballfields. These projects are one of many initiatives our operations department

contributes to reclaim community connection and reimagine public spaces.

Community connection is vital to the City's R3 Master Plan...and what better way to connect with each than by hosting events such as UC Citizens Academy, the Pinktober 5K and our first-ever MLK Day of Service Community Cleanup, and our first Juneteenth event was held last year, so get ready for our 2023 celebration!

The efforts of our citizens have not gone unnoticed. In hosting our first ever MLK Community Clean-up Day, Union City **Showed UP!** We are proud to announce that over 100 volunteers participated in our community cleanup event and collected over 250 bags of litter! Spreading out to multiple communities throughout the city, **our citizens** proved that we care about our environment and are committed to keeping our city clean and beautiful. I am so grateful for each and every one of these volunteers who gave their time and energy to make this happen. Our city is now a cleaner and healthier place to live, work and play. This is a testament to what we can achieve when we come together as a community. We are committed to making our city a better place for all, and community service is a vital part of that mission. By working together, we can build a stronger, cleaner, and more vibrant community. So, let's continue to show our love and support for this great city by participating in future events and spreading the word.

**THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING!** There are more days of service to come, and we need each and every one of you to be a part of it. Whether it's through volunteer work, community events, or simply keeping our streets and neighborhoods clean, **every** effort counts.

I am also proud to talk about our inaugural class of the Union City Citizen's Academy. This group of dedicated citizens has engaged with city leaders, elected officials, and various departments to learn about how local government operates. Throughout the 8-week program, they toured our city, met with department directors, and received valuable insights into how we operate as a city. This has given them a unique perspective on the inner workings of local government. Their participation in the Citizen's Academy has also given us the opportunity to hear from them, engage in healthy discussions, and understand their ideas for making our city an even better place to live. I am confident that this group of citizens will continue to be valuable contributors to our community, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact they will have in the years to come. We are looking forward to welcoming new cohorts to the Citizen's Academy and I am confident that they will inspire others to get involved and make a difference. I am proud to have them as part of our **story**.

We all know COVID has impacted all of us, and as we shift back to some sense of “normalcy” we are thankful our local and federal governments came together to provide much needed relief for our citizens.

As the American economy continues its recovery from the devastation of the pandemic, we have residents right here in Union City that faced rental debt, feared evictions, and loss of basic housing security. I am HAPPY to announce we helped families negatively affected by COVID-19 pandemic. The City supported those efforts with the funding received from the federal government.

**(ARPA ) Public Safety, Frontline Essential Workers’ Salaries, Mortgage, Rental and Utility Assistance. Infrastructure Improvements, Food Assistance, Small Business Support.....**

Additionally, The City of Union City launched its Rental & Mortgage Assistance Program for City residents. This program provided rental and mortgage assistance to eligible low-income families, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Payments up to \$3500 were made payable to landlords or mortgage companies on behalf of eligible residents.

As I begin to get out of your way, I leave you today with my vision for Union City. It is a bright new day, in Union City. Folks, we’re on the forefront of something truly magical. We have been blessed with an amazing leadership team, team-members, and a community who are all focused on moving our city forward. My commitment, as your Mayor, is this..... I will remain vigilant, and laser focused on the goals that we collectively have for our city. I will be 100% persistent in the pursuit of good governance and financial stability. I will remain steadfast in our engagement and advancement. I read this quote somewhere and it has stayed in my mind (We must **Shift** our thinking away from short-term gain toward long-term investment and sustainability, and always have the next generations in mind with every decision we make.) 2<sup>nd</sup>  
*Corinthians 4:8-9 We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by GOD!!! We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed!*

**CALL TO ACTION**

I am pleading with you – this is our call to action.

Family, let's **SHIFT** back to LOVE – remember what is good and hang on to it.

They say tough times don't last but tough people do.

And you all are tough people.

Do you or your community want to go back to the way we were before the pandemic, or do you all want to **SHIFT** towards something greater?

The time since March 2020 has no doubt, been challenging.

We don't ignore this at all.

Still, it's a matter of what you do with it now.

If you decide to **SHIFT** forward, then let's move forward!

Sixty years ago, JFK also asked a question of a group gathered at City Hall in New Orleans.

This question, reverberated across the nation and generations asked, "If not us, who? If not now, when?"

Let's make sure we answer this question, loud and clear—

It will be us! It will be now!

All the while, allowing love to lead.

Love for our country. Love for our community. Love for our residents.

Love that brings about cooperation. Love that brings about respect for one another's perspectives.

And, listen, – that’s how we are going to win!

“Not fighting what we hate but saving what we LOVE.”

**Well, I’ve said this before, and I’ll say it again. Union City is open for business, so it’s time to SHIFT. I love Andy and the gang too, but let’s drop the Mayberry mindset – GOD doesn’t just want us to get by, HE wants us to prosper and prosper fully!**

**GOD BLESS YOU, GOD BLESS UNION CITY, GOD BLESS FULTON COUNT, GOD BLESS THE STATE OF GEORGIA AND GOD BLESS THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA!!!!**

**LET ME LEAVE THIS WITH YOU,**

**I LOVE YOU AND THERE AIN’T NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT!**