I’d like to start by thanking the military veterans here tonight, for your service to our country. And to the Gold Star families joining us: We honor you, we honor your loved ones. Would all the veterans and Gold Star families, please stand or raise your hand to be recognized.   
  
Governor [Charles] Baker and Constitutional officers; President [Stanley] Rosenberg, Speaker [Robert] DeLeo, and members of the Legislature; the Boston City Council and our federal delegation; clergy and community leaders: welcome.   
  
To my mother Mary and my brother John, to Lorrie and Lauren, and my entire family: thank you for your love and support.   
  
And to everyone in Symphony Hall tonight or watching at home, good evening.   
  
I’m here tonight to report that the City of Boston is as strong as it has ever been. A year ago I stood on this stage and invited you to help build a thriving, healthy, and innovative future for our city. We are creating that vision together, in Imagine Boston 2030, our first citywide plan in 50 years. And we are making it a reality, by achieving the goals we set last year.   
  
In 2015:   
  
We built more homes than ever. Nearly 4,900 units started—a new record. Over 1,000 of those were affordable homes—a new record. And 3,800 homes were completed—another new record. 

* - We began construction on Dearborn STEM Academy in Roxbury, Boston’s first high school built specifically for science and technology.
* - Violent crime and property crime went down for the second straight year, and homicides fell to a 16-year low.
* - Unemployment fell to a 14-year low.
* - We opened a state-of-the art homeless facility, replacing every shelter bed from Long Island.
* - We created the nation’s first Office of Recovery Services, to combat substance abuse.
* - We set a new national standard for firefighter safety, by investing in equipment to prevent job-related cancers.
* - We defended our title as the #1 American city for energy efficiency. And at the historic Paris climate talks, we beat out cities around the world to win the award for community engagement.
* - To make City Hall more responsive: we launched a 311 system; we unveiled a pilot of our new website; and we gained international attention for CityScore, a first-ofits-kind, data-driven scoring system for city government.

Make no mistake, the year brought challenges. It began with nearly 10 feet of snow. From the North End to Brighton to Hyde Park, we shoveled. We scraped. We salted. And we shoveled some more. But despite nearly $40 million in plowing costs, we worked with the City Council to end the year with our budget surplus intact; and perfect bond ratings adding millions of dollars to invest in parks, schools, and senior housing.  
  
I want to thank all 18,000 employees of the City of Boston, along with the businesses, nonprofits, and workers, the students and teachers, the immigrants and entrepreneurs, the dreamers and the doers, the young and the old, who make our city great.  
  
I’m so proud of the work we did together. I’ve been in this job for 2 years now. But every morning I get up and I feel like my dream came true all over again. A kid from Dorchester, who made some mistakes and needed some help, gets to be mayor of the greatest city in the world.  
  
I think of how far I’ve come, and the people who helped me, and I’m grateful. I think of people I meet all across our city, who share their hopes and dreams with me, and I am inspired.  
  
But I also think about the people I meet who are struggling. I think about Brianna and her two children. I met them at the Table of Friends Thanksgiving dinner at the TD Garden. They were hoping for a hot meal, but dreaming of a real home and a better life. And they weren’t the only ones. No matter what progress we made the day before, or the year before, our work isn’t done. Not even close.   
  
But I have faith. I have faith that in Boston we have the talent, and we have the heart, to keep doing that work until we are a city where every family can make a home, every kid gets a strong start in school, and every adult has a fair chance to build a career. That’s the vision, and that’s the work, I recommit myself to, every day. Tonight, as I discuss our plans for the coming year, I ask everyone to join me: to commit to each other that we’ll work together, we’ll build our dreams together, and we’ll leave no one behind. This is the vision of community that Boston, at its best, has always been about. It’s how we’ve made history. And it’s how we’ll make the future as well.   
  
This is why I look forward to welcoming General Electric to its new global headquarters in Boston. GE is not only a historic innovator, returning to the city where Thomas Edison got his start. It’s not only another step forward for Boston on the world stage. It’s a magnet for talent and investment that we’ll direct toward our shared goals: in opportunity, in community, in education.  
  
That’s the future I’m focused on tonight, and every day. And if you look around Symphony Hall, you’ll see that future: hundreds of students from the Boston Public Schools are here. I invited them, because they need to be part of the conversation about the direction their city is heading. And when it comes to our schools, they deserve to know that their Mayor stands behind them.  
  
I want to address them directly: I know how hard you work. I know the challenges you face. I was a struggling student in this city once, as were many of the adults in this room. We don’t need you to be perfect. We need you to keep learning, and keep believing in your dreams. The rest is on us. You deserve a community united behind you. That’s why I want you and everyone to know: the Boston Public Schools are my priority. A year ago, I said, despite our many bright spots, I was not satisfied with our system’s performance. So we went to work. 

* - We appointed a dynamic superintendent in Dr. Tommy Chang.
* - We hired 24 new principals. I met with most of them personally. I ask all our principals to stand and be recognized.
* - We began extending the school day for every student through 8th grade.
* - We are redesigning our high schools for 21st-century education.
* - We invited the entire community to help create our 10-year school building plan.
* - And for the 3rd straight year, I will send a budget to the City Council that increases school funding, for a total increase of nearly $90 million since I took office.

Our students are making us proud. Fourth and 8th graders reached new heights on national reading tests. Tenth-grade MCAS scores went up, and achievement gaps shrank. I want to recognize exceptional achievements at Perkins Elementary in South Boston and English High in Jamaica Plain. And I want to congratulate all our students and all our teachers for your hard work.  
  
Student success goes deeper than what we can measure in the classroom. The students here tonight show why. Take Kalsie King, a senior at the John D. O’Bryant High School. She runs a clothing drive for fellow students, in memory of the year her mother spent homeless. That’s the kind of character and heart we have in our schools. They are why we set our sights high and keep our eyes on the prize: to end achievement gaps, to make every school a success story, and to create a national model for across-the-board excellence in urban education.   
  
Reaching that goal will take hard work, and more. It will require a unified effort. That’s why the conversation around our schools concerns me. Instead of unity, too often we’ve seen schools pitted against one another, by adults.  
  
Tonight, I’m calling on everyone to come together to back all our children, all our teachers, and all our schools. That means fair and sustainable funding for both district and charter schools. It means exploring a unified enrollment system that could help families and level the playing field among schools. This spring we will deepen the enrollment conversation, to address challenges in special education, language services, discipline policies, and transportation.  
  
I know that passions run deep. And they should. But the commitment we share to Boston’s children runs deeper. We have tremendous opportunities to come together right now, behind programs that experts, teachers, and parents all agree make a lasting difference. That’s why I invite everyone to join me in making a stand for early education. The Boston Public Schools pre-kindergarten program is proven to close the achievement gap. The city has added seats in each of the last two years. Yet hundreds of children still sit on waiting lists, their parents frustrated and already doubting that the system will ever work for them. We’ve stretched funding as far as it will go. And we are not alone. I ask leadership at the Statehouse, and every legislator, to work with Boston, with Lawrence, with Salem, with Attleboro and other cities and towns to expand access to high-quality pre-kindergarten.  
  
I know we share this priority. Now let’s fund it. Let’s work through the state budget process this year to make it a full investment in our children, our families, and our Commonwealth’s future. Let’s live up to our reputation as the world leader in learning. Let’s put Boston and Massachusetts at the forefront of early education. And let’s give all our kids an equal chance at success.  
  
As Bostonians share their hopes with me, they also share their challenges. More often than not, housing is at the top of the list. Graduates in Allston, families in East Boston, seniors in Roslindale: people are struggling to pay rents and find homes they can afford.  
  
We’ve worked relentlessly to meet the demand that’s driving this pressure. We’re not letting up. Recently we strengthened one of our most successful policies: inclusionary development. You can see its impact in places like the Hong Lok House in Chinatown, which kept longtime residents in their neighborhood. The new policy will bring more affordable homes where they are needed most. And it will spur middle-class housing across the city.

New homes will help bring costs back to working people’s budgets. But many just want a fair deal where they live right now. Last year, we doubled the compensation people get when their apartments are turned into condos. But we should do more than compensate. We should help people stay in their communities. Tonight, I can announce a new Office of Housing Stability, to do just that. It’s going to develop resources for tenants, incentives for landlords who do the right thing, and partnerships with developers to keep more of our housing stock affordable.  
  
People want to live in Boston. That’s a good thing. But we need to shape growth as a community, not let it shape us. That’s what residents are doing along the Red Line in South Boston, and the Orange Line in Jamaica Plain. They’re helping us plan vibrant, walkable streets, with affordable homes, diverse businesses, and great open space. Tonight I can announce two new planning areas: Glover’s Corner in Dorchester and Dudley Square in Roxbury.  
  
These conversations will unlock the vitality that makes city neighborhoods great. Meanwhile, all across the city Imagine Boston 2030 is rooting our city’s planning strategy in these same community visions. So I’m pleased to announce that Imagine Boston director, Sara Myerson, will be the new Planning Director at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.  
  
While we plan, we’ll invest in quality of life all across our city. Our Parks budget is the biggest in Boston’s history. We've transformed parks in Mattapan, Charlestown, and East Boston; and completed an Open Space Plan for the entire city. This year, we’ll convert over 6 acres of land into permanent new parks.   
  
I grew up in our parks. I know how much kids and families depend on them. So I was moved when a group of young people came to see me at Ramsay Park in the South End last summer. They told me what it was like to grow up right next door to a park that was too unsafe to use, and how they’ve been working to fix that. They are here tonight. I’m happy to tell them: because of your advocacy, and with your input, we are going to completely renovate Ramsay Park.  
  
We’re going to ensure that America’s first public parks are America’s best, and—inspired by the Martin Richard Playground being built next to the Children’s Museum—America’s most inclusive public parks as well.  
  
We’re also deepening our commitment to arts and culture. This summer we’ll cap a $78 million investment in the Boston Public Library by unveiling a welcoming new Boylston Street entrance in the Back Bay. We’ll also complete Boston Creates, a roadmap for supporting the arts in every neighborhood. And we’ll invest $1 million in local artists. As we grow, we have to support the older residents who built this city. I think of Maria Sanchez, who has devoted her life to her neighbors in Mission Hill. Together we celebrated 40 new affordable senior apartments, in a building named in her honor, by the Roxbury Crossing T station. People like Maria are the reason we invested $3 million in senior housing and secured new senior discounts: for water, for cable, and for internet rates. This year we’ll go further, by building a plan to make Boston America’s most age-friendly city.   
  
Workers and employers moving forward together. That’s our economic vision, and it’s a proven success. What we offered GE was less an incentive package, than a cultural advantage. Innovation. Education. And a community that works and grows together. This creative, collaborative approach defines our growth strategy, not only in attracting new business, but empowering the workers and employers already here.

* - This year we’ll launch a Business Expansion Toolkit, to help employers add jobs and support workers.
* - We’ll open a Small Business Center, to boost the entrepreneurs so vital to both economy and community.
* - We’ll offer 40 more of our groundbreaking Salary Negotiation Workshops for women.
* - We’ll build our new Apprenticeship Program, with on-the-job training and a 2-year degree for low-income workers.
* - And we’ll take the conversation about inequality one step further. We will bring workers and employers together in a task force to study a $15-an-hour minimum wage for Boston.

Wherever I go, across the country, I’m asked about policing. That’s because at a time of great national tension, we continue to build trust. Our police officers, street workers, and young people are engaging. Working with the Building Trades and others in job-training programs like Operation Exit, we are offering second chances and turning lives around. And we have invited the community to help shape our anti-violence strategy. In Peace Walks, in Social Justice meetings, and in relationships that grow stronger every day, we are coming together.  
  
It’s making a difference. Boston police officers took nearly 800 guns off the streets last year. Violent crime went down 3%. Property crime went down 10%. All major crime went down by 9%. And homicides hit a 16-year low. All the while, arrests dropped by 15% as well. What that means is we are becoming a safer city not by locking people up, but by lifting people up.  
  
In addition, our clearance rate for solving homicides passed 72%, 15 points higher than the national average for cities our size. Our police and our communities are working together. It’s not us and them, in Boston. It’s We.  
  
And We won’t let up for a minute. With non-fatal shootings up slightly last year, we can’t afford to. It’s not just a city problem. It’s America’s problem. Two weeks ago I went to Washington and stood with the President, as he unveiled new steps to keep guns out of criminal hands. I said there, what I say here: Americans agree on common-sense gun reforms. In Boston, we are showing how to turn consensus into action. So we’ll keep working with cities and states, with experts and survivors, with gun dealers and owners. And we’ll keep building trust in the community every day.   
  
We’ll face up to the impact of history, as well. In community conversations on race and class, we are working through divisions that run deep in our city’s social fabric. And we are turning this healing into real, measurable change toward a more equitable city. We’ll take another step this year by backing the Boston Basics Campaign, a grassroots community movement to close learning gaps from birth to age 3.  
  
We are breaking new ground and offering new hope. We are proving that when Boston comes together, when we truly act as one community, we can change our city, and change the world. We’ve been doing it for a long time. From the first public library to the first Office of Recovery Services, Boston is a city on the cutting edge of the common good. We can do the same for urban education—if we come together. We can do the same for housing, income, and wealth inequality—if we work together.  
  
That’s what I ask each of us to commit to, tonight. Bring to the table not just our own wants, but a vision for our common welfare. Find common ground, even when we don’t agree on everything. Protect what we love about our city by, sometimes, embracing change.  
  
Let me introduce you to one more Bostonian who inspired me last year. Donald Wilkins is an Air Force veteran I met in our Homes for the Brave program. It’s placed more than 500 veterans in permanent housing. Donald told me how the stigma of homelessness chipped away at his pride. He said our new system—and his new apartment in West Roxbury—was the key to a new life.  
  
Donald is with us tonight. It’s because of his courage, and the courage of countless veterans like him, that I am so proud to announce: we have ended chronic veterans’ homelessness in Boston. And we are working every day to end all chronic homelessness by the year 2018.  
  
Tonight I’ve asked Bostonians to come together, and go the extra mile, to make sure our success reaches everyone. I’ve asked because I know that not just the state of our city, but the soul of our city, is strong. Every day, I see us building our dreams together. Every day, my love of this city, and my belief in this city, grows. We will meet our challenges and keep changing the world. And our future will be greater than any one of us can imagine.  
  
Thank you all. May God Bless the City of Boston, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the United States of America.