I’M HONORED AND PLEASED TO BE WITH ALL OF YOU TODAY, TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE STATE OF OUR CITY.

BEFORE I DO THAT, I HOPE YOU’LL INDULGE ME IN TELLING YOU SOMETHING ABOUT WHAT BEING THE MAYOR OF BIRMINGHAM MEANS TO ME.

BIRMINGHAM IS MY HOMETOWN. I WAS BORN AND RAISED HERE. I LEFT TO GET MY COLLEGE DEGREE IN ATLANTA, AT MOREHOUSE — AND FOUR YEARS LATER, I CAME RIGHT BACK TO BIRMINGHAM.

I CAME BACK BECAUSE I KNEW THAT THIS WAS WHERE I WANTED TO LIVE MY LIFE AND FIND MEANINGFUL WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE BETTERMENT OF THE PLACE I CALL HOME.

I CAME BACK BECAUSE I LOVED BIRMINGHAM.

TODAY, I LOVE IT EVEN MORE, AND I’M HUMBLED BEYOND MEASURE THAT MY FELLOW CITIZENS CHOSE ME TO LEAD BIRMINGHAM INTO THE FUTURE. I BELIEVE THAT WE, AS A CITY, CAN DO GREAT THINGS — IF WE DO THE RIGHT THINGS.

I WANT TO OFFER A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO MY COLLEAGUES AT THE BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL FOR REMARKABLE SERVICE AND PARTNERSHIP THAT WE HAVE BEGUN OVER THE PAST MONTH AND A HALF. IT HAS BEEN A TERRIFIC START AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I DON’T TAKE IT FOR GRANTED.

THIS RELATIONSHIP IS IMPORTANT TO ME AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO THE PEOPLE THAT ELECTED US. YOU HAVE MY PLEDGE TO CONTINUE TO BE FORTHRIGHT AND ENSURING THAT WE ARE WALKING TOGETHER TO MOVE BIRMINGHAM FORWARD.

WITH THAT IN MIND, I WILL TELL YOU THAT THE STATE OF OUR COMMUNITY IS AN OPEN QUESTION THAT ONLY YOU AND I CAN ANSWER TOGETHER.

DON’T MISUNDERSTAND ME: A LOT OF POSITIVE THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN MANY OF OUR NEIGHBORHOODS.

OUR DOWNTOWN AREA IS FLOURISHING AS IT HASN’T FOR GENERATIONS.

WE HAVE A GROWING INNOVATION ECONOMY AND AN INCREASING NUMBER OF ENTREPREURS IN TECHNOLOGY-RELATED FIELDS.

WE ARE ENJOYING A RENEWED SENSE OF CIVIC PRIDE, BIRTHED BY GENERATIONS THAT PRECEDED US AND REIMAGINED BY OUR CHILDREN.

IN SIGNIFICANT WAYS, BIRMINGHAM IS IN A STATE OF TRANSFORMATION. WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS.

AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE BEING HELD BACK BY OUR LACK OF PROGRESS IN CERTAIN RESPECTS.

A THIRD OF OUR POPULATION, AND MOST OF THE CHILDREN IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, LIVE IN POVERTY.

FAR TOO MANY OF OUR NEIGHBORHOODS HAVE BEEN NEGLECTED AND UNDERSERVED, THEIR NEEDS RELEGATED TO A LOW PRIORITY.

FOR FAR TOO MANY OF BIRMINGHAM’S CHILDREN, PROSPECTS ARE LIMITED BY A LACK OF ACCESS TO THE BASIC INGREDIENTS OF SELF-ADVANCEMENT.

EDUCATION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT — BUT NOT THE ONLY ONE.

THERE IS THE AVAILABILITY OF PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT.

THERE’S EXPOSURE TO POTENTIAL CAREER PATHS, AND OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP THE SKILLS AND OBTAIN DEGREES AND CERTIFICATIONS THAT MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO PURSUE THEM.

THESE ARE THE CHALLENGES WE FACE IN BIRMINGHAM.

THEY ARE REAL, AND THEY ARE A COUNTERWEIGHT TO BIRMINGHAM’S OPPORTUNITY TO ACCELERATE AND PERPETUATE OUR PROGRESS.

THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT STAND IN OUR WAY, IF WE TRULY WANT BIRMINGHAM TO BE A GREAT CITY.

THERE ARE SOLUTIONS TO OUR CHALLENGES — AND THE FULL REALIZATION OF OUR OPPORTUNITIES — CAN ONLY COME FROM OUR ABILITY TO MAKE AND SUSTAIN AND BUILD ON CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE IN OUR CITY.

EVERY ACTION WE TAKE — AS INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS, NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, CORPORATIONS, INSTITUTIONS, ELECTED OFFICIALS — AFFECTS THE LIFE OF THE CITY.

WE ARE ALL CONNECTED.

IDEALLY, WE ALL HAVE THE BEST INTEREST OF THE COMMUNITY — OF OUR FELLOW CITIZENS — IN MIND.

THAT STARTS WITH CITY HALL.

IT IS INCUMBENT ON ME, AND ON ALL OF THE MEMBERS OF OUR CITY COUNCIL, TO DO THE JOBS WE WERE ELECTED TO DO — AND TO DO THEM IN…

· WAYS THAT REFLECT THE VALUES OF FAIRNESS AND EQUITY  
· WAYS THAT GENERATE MORE AND BETTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL OF OUR CITIZENS AND EACH OF OUR CITY’S NEIGHBORHOODS  
· WAYS THAT PROMOTE A STRONGER SENSE OF COMMUNITY, AND A BROAD COMMITMENT TO SHARED GOALS AND PRIORITIES  
SO… HOW ARE WE GETTING THAT DONE?

HOW ARE WE INCORPORATING OUR AMBITIOUS GOALS WITH THE EVERYDAY RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITY GOVERNMENT TO DELIVER BASIC SERVICES AND DEVOTE PUBLIC RESOURCES TO SUPPORTING THINGS THAT BENEFIT ALL OF OUR CITIZENS?

FROM AN OPERATIONAL STANDPOINT, IT ALL REVOLVES AROUND THE QUESTION “HOW DO THE ACTIONS WE TAKE HELP ALL 99 NEIGHBORHOODS?”

WE’VE ASKED THAT QUESTION IN EVALUATING ALL ASPECTS OF CITY GOVERNMENT SINCE TAKING OFFICE, AND WILL CONTINUE TO ASK IT IN EVALUATING OUR OWN PERFORMANCE OVER TIME.

AS IT RELATES TO THE PRESENT, THE ANSWER IS WHAT IS WAS DURING MY CAMPAIGN … “WE DESERVE BETTER.”

TO HONOR MY COMMITMENT TO THE CITIZENS OF BIRMINGHAM, WE ARE BUILDING A NEW CULTURE AT CITY HALL, BASED ON THE CORE TENETS OF:

· CUSTOMER SERVICE  
· EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS  
· TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
THAT CULTURE IS REFLECTED IN OUR OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES, WHICH ARE BUILT AROUND FOUR PRIMARY AREAS OF FOCUS:

· PUBLIC SAFETY  
· PUBLIC WORKS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
· NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION  
· INVESTING IN BIRMINGHAM’S CHILDREN  
IN THE AREA OF PUBLIC SAFETY, WE’RE BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT SEVERAL INITIATIVES. THESE INCLUDE:

· CONDUCTING A NATIONWIDE SEARCH FOR A NEW POLICE CHIEF AND SUPPORTING POLICING STRATEGIES THAT DETER CRIME DURING PEAK HOURS IN KEY LOCATIONS.  
· LOOKING TO BETTER SERVE THE PUBLIC AND PROMOTE BETTER POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS BY HAVING OUR POLICE OFFICERS ENGAGE MORE DIRECTLY WITH NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS, MERCHANTS AND BUSINESSPEOPLE  
· CONTINUING TO IMPROVE THE TECHNOLOGY OUR POLICE DEPARTMENT HAS AVAILABLE TO FIGHT CRIME AND PROTECT THE PUBLIC  
· WORKING WITH ALABAMA POWER COMPANY TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY BY UPGRADING THE CITY’S STREETLIGHT SYSTEM  
· REDUCING YOUTH VIOLENCE BY SUPPORTING PROGRAMS THROUGH THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AND WORKING WITH THE BOARD TO ENSURE THAT PARKS AND REC RESOURCES ARE ADEQUATE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR CITIZENS  
· WORKING WITH ALL INTERESTED PARTNERS TO ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF AFTER-SCHOOL AND SUMMER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS  
IN THE AREA OF PUBLIC WORKS, OUR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO PROVIDE BASIC SERVICES IN A TIMELY, EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANNER. WE WILL DO THAT, BUT WE ALSO NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB OF CLEANING UP OUR CITY — AND KEEPING IT CLEAN.

THAT INCLUDES IMPROVING AND EXPEDITING THE PROCESSES FOR CUTTING OVERGROWN LOTS AND ELIMINATING ABANDONED HOUSES.

AN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT IS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF REAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT — OF PROMOTING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR NEIGHBORHOODS BY EXPANDING HOUSING OPTIONS AND PROVIDING INCENTIVES TO ATTRACT NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL GROWTH.

WHICH LEADS US INTO THE AREA OF NEIGHBORHOODS. I BELIEVE FIRMLY THAT OUR CITY IS ONLY AS STRONG AS ITS MOST NEEDFUL NEIGHBORHOOD, AND WITH THAT AS OUR STANDARD, WE’RE WORKING TO ADDRESS NEEDS AND ACCELERATE THE PROCESS OF REVITALIZATION.

WE’LL BE WORKING IN EVERY AREA OF THE CITY TO REDUCE CRIME, ELIMINATE BLIGHT AND INCREASE THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF ALL CITIZENS.

WE WILL DEVOTE THE DOLLARS AND RESOURCES NECESSARY TO REPAVE STREETS, FILL POTHOLES AND REPAIR SIDEWALKS THROUGHOUT BIRMINGHAM.

MY GOAL IS FOR EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD IN BIRMINGHAM TO BECOME A “CHOICE” NEIGHBORHOOD. THAT MEANS A PLACE THAT PEOPLE ACTIVELY CHOOSE TO LIVE, BECAUSE IT HAS ALL OF THE THINGS NECESSARY FOR A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE.

ALL OF OUR NEIGHBORHOODS CAN BE PLACES WHERE RESIDENTS HAVE IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES…WHERE EDUCATIONAL AND ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS ARE READILY AVAILABLE…WHERE THEY KNOW AND APPRECIATE THEIR NEIGHBORS, THEIR PROPERTY VALUES ARE RISING AND THEY FEEL SAFE ON THEIR STREETS AND IN THEIR OWN HOMES.

THAT IS WHAT I MEAN BY “CHOICE” NEIGHBORHOOD, AND THAT’S WHAT CITY HALL IS WORKING TO MAKE POSSIBLE FOR EVERY PERSON AND EVERY FAMILY IN BIRMINGHAM.

FINALLY, IN THE AREA OF INVESTING IN BIRMINGHAM’S CHILDREN, THE GOAL IS TO ENSURE A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN BY PROVIDING THEM WITH MORE AND BETTER OPPORTUNTIES TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL. WE’LL DO THAT BY WORKING WITH THE BIRMINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS ON SEVERAL INITIATIVES, INCLUDING:

· CREATING A NETWORK OF EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTERS  
· EXPANDING PRE-K AND SUMMER READING PROGRAMS  
· ENGAGING UAB AND OUR CITY’S GROWING TECHNOLOGY SECTOR IN ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL-TO-STARTUP PIPELINE FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS WHO WANT TO PURSUE CAREERS IN SCIENCE, OR BECOME ENTREPRENEURS IN THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR  
IN ADDITION, WE WANT TO LAUNCH THE “FRED L. SHUTTLEWORTH OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP.” THIS PROGRAM WILL PROVIDE DEBT-FREE TUITION FOR EVERY GRADUATING STUDENT IN THE BIRMINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS WHO WANTS TO ATTEND A COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN JEFFERSON COUNTY.

IN ALL HONESTY, WE DON’T HAVE TO REINVENT THE WHEEL TO KNOW HOW TO MAKE THESE THINGS SUCCESSFUL. MOST OF THE PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES I’VE MENTIONED ARE THINGS THAT HAVE WORKED IN OTHER COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY — AND THAT WILL WORK FOR US IN BIRMINGHAM.

HOW DO WE MAKE THEM WORK? WE MAKE THEM WORK BY MAKING THE KINDS OF CONNECTIONS I TALKED ABOUT EARLIER — BETWEEN CITIZENS, GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY GROUPS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, FOUNDATIONS AND NONPROFITS — THAT UNITE US IN OUR OBJECTIVES AND OUR ACTIONS AROUND A SHARED VISION OF WHAT BIRMINGHAM CAN BE.

IN THAT REGARD, I WANT TO TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO TALK ABOUT OUR LOCAL CORPORATE COMMUNITY AND ITS ROLE AS A PARTNER IN OUR EFFORTS.

THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAS CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TO THE MOMENTUM THAT BIRMINGHAM HAS BUILT OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. AND FRANKLY, MUCH OF WHAT WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS WILL BE POSSIBLE IF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY WILL BE FULLY ENGAGED AND SUPPORTIVE.

THE ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE IN WHICH BIRMINGHAM COMPETES HAS CHANGED, AND IS EVOLVING RAPIDLY.

OUR LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS ONLY GOING TO SUCCEED AND GROW AND EXPAND TO THE EXTENT THAT WE ARE ABLE TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN:

· ATTRACTING NEW BUSINESSES, JOBS AND INVESTMENT  
· CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXISTING BUSINESSES TO THRIVE AND EXPAND  
· POSITIONING OURSELVES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES IN TECHNOLOGY-RELATED FIELDS, INCLUDING PROMOTING THE TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND COMMERCIALIZING THE SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES MADE AT UAB AND SOUTHERN RESEARCH

· SHOWCASING AND BUILDING ON PROVEN SUCCESSES BY LOCAL START-UPS AND ACCELERATORS  
MOST IMPORTANTLY OF ALL, WE NEED THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY TO JOIN US IN INVESTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR LOCAL WORKFORCE.

IF BIRMINGHAM IS GOING TO COMPETE FOR, AND WIN, THE JOBS OF THE FUTURE AND MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR OUR CHILDREN TO PURSUE AND ATTAIN THEIR DREAMS, THEN WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT ANY COMPANY CONSIDERING LOCATING OR EXPANDING IN BIRMINGHAM HAS ACCESS TO A WORKFORCE THAT HAS STRONG ABILITIES IN MATH AND SCIENCE, AND IS EQUIPPED WITH SPECIALIZED SKILLS AND TALENTS.

WE CAN DO THIS — BUT IT REQUIRES MAKING THOSE CONNECTIONS. IT REQUIRES AN APPROACH THAT IS INNOVATIVE, STRATEGIC, AND ABOVE ALL, COLLABORATIVE.

WE CAN DO THIS BECAUSE, AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE ALL WANT THE SAME THINGS, FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND ALL OF ITS CITIZENS. WE CAN DO THIS BECAUSE IT IS OUR TIME — TIME FOR BIRMINGHAM TO FULFILL ITS LONGSTANDING POTENTIAL AND TAKE ITS PLACE AMONG AMERICA’S GREAT CITIES.

WE CAN DO THIS BECAUSE BIRMINGHAM IS A PLACE WHERE HISTORY HAS BEEN MADE. IT’S A PLACE WHERE CITIZENS HAVE TAKEN IT ON THEMSELVES TO DO THE THINGS NECESSARY TO MAKE BIRMINGHAM A BETTER CITY FOR ALL OF THE PEOPLE WHO CALL IT HOME.

IT’S A PLACE WHERE INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS HAVE RISEN TO PROVIDE THE LEADERSHIP NEEDED AT DEFINING MOMENTS IN OUR HISTORY TO HELP OUR CITY GROW AND ENSURE A BETTER BIRMINGHAM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT WE ARE IN JUST SUCH A MOMENT TODAY. BIRMINGHAM HAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GREATNESS, AND YOU AND I AND EVERY PERSON WHO LOVES BIRMINGHAM AS WE DO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SOME HISTORY OF OUR OWN.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, YOUR ATTENTION, AND YOUR COMMITMENT TO JOIN ME IN PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST.