Good evening.

I want to start by thanking the public officials from the state and the county who have joined us tonight; members of the clergy; members of the court; the Jersey City Council who have been partners in everything we do; fellow members of my administration; and, most importantly, you, the residents of this great city.

I couldn't be more proud to stand before you once again to discuss the past, present, and future of Jersey City. Yet, this time, I stand before you to give the first State of the City Address of my second term. I am beyond humbled to have been given a chance to serve another four years as Mayor of this diverse, dynamic, and unique city. It has been an honor of a lifetime to have been elected to serve twice, and I am confident that we will continue to work together to move our city towards great things.

Last year was an important year for our Administration and our City. We made major strides forward, worked through formidable challenges together, and ultimately, became a better city. The state of our City is strong, and getting stronger.

Everyday, regardless of the neighborhood in which you live, you are impacted by the progress we have made during the past four years. Perhaps it is the police officers in your neighborhood that have become members of your community since our Police Department has grown to the largest it has been in more than two decades, or the new small business that has opened up on your block thanks to the renaissance away from the waterfront that we are experiencing for the first time in years, or maybe it's the new park around the corner that your kids go to after school to participate in one of over 30 new recreation programs. Our city and community is changing for the better.

As we begin our new term with renewed energy, fresh ideas, and new partners, I want to use this Address to focus on the future of our city and the changes we envision for this coming year. I want to share with you not what we have done during the past four years, but what we will do during the next year. Our success will not rest on what we have accomplished, but rather, our accomplishments will serve as a blueprint for the future of Jersey City.

Our goals have not changed. We are continuing to work towards a safer city, one that applauds diversity, encourages innovation, and invites the community to be part of the progress.

A city can only move forward when it has a strong foundation to build upon. In Jersey City, we know that public safety is that first fundamental building block, and during the past four years, we have proven that it is our most important focus. The safety of our residents not only impacts our ability to effectively run our city, but it serves as the foundation for everything else that we do.

During the past year, we have started to see the results of our dedication to building a safer city. In 2017, Jersey City saw decreases in all major crime categories including homicides, assaults, and robberies. Also, while this is not typically a statistic you see reported in the newspaper, it is important to share that we have continued to see the number of illegal guns recovered increase dramatically, with 23% more guns recovered in 2017 than were recovered in 2016. Last year, the JCPD recovered a total of 315 illegal guns off our street.

If you have ever wondered about the efficiency of the day-to-day operations of our police officers, gun recoveries is a good indicator of their abilities. Every gun recovered has a story behind it. A recovered gun means an officer had to successfully approach and disarm a dangerous criminal that was illegally carrying a weapon. Each one of those recovered guns is tied to a criminal who had no intent of using that gun for any reason other than terrorizing our community. Last year, our officers engaged in this situation over 300 time, and thankfully, no one was hurt. This is a testament to the JCPD and our brave, dedicated officers, and on behalf of the city, thank you for all that you do to keep our city safe.

Day by day, our city is becoming safer. During the past five years, we have been hyper-focused on growing our police department with an emphasis on enhancing the diversity of our officers. When I came into office in 2013, I knew that building a safer city required us to grow our police force, which had been suffering from historically low staffing levels. We started hiring aggressively, bringing in over 295 officers during the past few years, including the most recent class of 76 recruits, of which some are here with us tonight. This is the largest class we have seen in three decades, and I want to thank them for their dedication to our city's safety, and I ask that they stand to be recognized.

Being Mayor also includes making decisions that may be unpopular, but are ultimately the best decisions for the city as a whole. Recently, I announced that we will be ending the off-duty police program later this year. Every Mayor since the 1990s has known that there are serious issue with this program, including the potential for corruption. While it was not the the easiest decision to end this program, I am confident that it is the right

decision. For those of you that are skeptical, I'd like you to ask yourself one simple question on the necessity of this program: why is it that our neighbors in New York City can build 100 story buildings in a more densely populated area and not require one police officer be hired as long as they have a safety plan in place, but here in Jersey City we require countless officers be hired for smaller projects. You may not know it, but every time you see a police officer at a utility construction site, the utility company has embedded the added cost for police into the rate that you as the taxpayer pay. The hiring of off duty officers for these types of jobs is ultimately a backdoor tax on you as a resident.

In 2018, this will all change. Tonight is a good opportunity to discuss how I envision this program working. We are going to require safety plans for construction sites prior to site plan approval. We will also set up a program to hire trained community members and use existing crossing guards to monitor these sites instead of off-duty police officers.

We will root out corruption while giving Jersey City residents an opportunities to work. Furthermore, we will be pursuing rate reduction conversations with the utilities companies now that the costly requirement for officers is no longer there, and we expect that you the taxpayers to see rate savings as a result. These are big changes, and I believe it is important to give you a perspective beyond what you may read in the newspaper.

Before we move from the topic of policing, I would also like to point out that with the growth in our Police Department has come a change in its leadership, and I am proud to recognize Jersey City Police Department's new chief, Mike Kelly, who is here tonight. I selected Mike Kelly to be the chief not only because of his expertise in policing, but also because of his commitment to our community.

Last year, we used a community-driven approach to rework the City's close caption camera system, which was started in the mid-2000 but has never really worked properly. This was a big undertaking, but during the past year we installed 107 cameras during phase one, and have recently started phase two of this project which will put another 40 cameras on our streets. We have worked with the community to find the best locations for these cameras, starting on the south end of the city first, and then working north. This is something that had been neglected for decades, and will now help our officers keep our streets safe.

This year, we are excited to be expanding our community-driven public safety initiatives beyond CCTV. We all know that pedestrian fatalities in New Jersey increased over the last year to the highest number in more than two decades. Several of these tragedies have happened in our own community, and we have seen firsthand the unfortunate reality behind these statistics.

Earlier this year, I signed an Executive Order adopting the Vision Zero initiative for Jersey City, setting a goal to eliminate traffic fatalities on our roadways by 2026. Each and every life that is lost due to a traffic crash is avoidable, and I am proud that we are the first in New Jersey to take an important step towards building a powerful, data-driven plan that ensures no more lives will be lost on Jersey City roads.

This initiative will be driven by the community because we understand the impact these types of crashes have on our residents, and we are making sure that you have a voice in developing a solution. The Task Force created by this plan will include members of a wide variety of City departments, including Planning, Health, and Public Works, as well as representatives from our schools. This Task Force will also include representatives from two of groups that have been instrumental in advocating for this initiative, and I ask that Bike JC and Safe Streets JC please stand and be recognized.

Tonight is not only about enhancing public safety through changes in the Police Department, but also about important changes within the Jersey City Fire Department as well. This year, we appointed a new Fire Chief to lead the Department, Chief Mcgill. Chief McGill and I will work to strengthen the Fire Department's community outreach, with a focus on expanding the Fire Department the same way we have done with the Police Department so that our firefighters better reflect the community they serve.

We also look forward to making some big changes to the Department's infrastructure as well. This year, we are committed to starting the process of building a new fire house to replace the Halladay Street Fire House that serves the Bergen-Lafayette community.

Our commitment to more fire houses and companies has never been stronger. We have grown the Fire Department as well, and our levels are the highest they have been since 2000. This speaks to our commitment to making sure residents are safe in their homes and on the streets.

So, if you can please join me one last time for a round of applause for the work of our public safety officers that are here tonight.

Beyond the fundamental building block of ensuring public safety, a successful city requires a multidimensional approach to providing opportunities for residents to stay active and engaged.

Our commitment to creating more parks in order to fulfill that goal has been a continuous effort, and I am excited to announce a number of projects that will take place this year to improve our neighborhoods and provide spaces for our community to come together.

For residents in the Heights, we have started working with the community to create a master plan for Leonard Gordon Park. This is a park that has enormous potential, and this year, we are working to bring it back to life.

We will also make improvements to Audubon Park this year, including the addition of a multi-purpose area that will provide a better space for the community to come together for markets, performances, and events.

Just a few weeks ago, we cut the ribbon on the renovated Cosmo DiSanto Playground within Pavonia Park that we worked with the community to renovate.

During the next few months, we will see additional updates and renovations to a number of other Jersey City parks, such as Pershing Field, Sgt. Anthony Park, 16th Street Park and the new Ogden Avenue Dog Park.

The increase in the number of parks that are being renovated is directly tied to the open space tax initiative that our Administration championed last year. This was a change that had been discussed for years through different administrations that ultimately didn't move forward. We took that important step, and as a result, this year we will have an additional $660,000 to put towards our parks.

We have made truly incredible progress on upgrading our parks during the past few years, and this year, I am confident we will continue to improve these crucial public spaces.

With improvements to our parks, comes improvements to our Recreation Department as well, and I am excited to share with you what is on the horizon for 2018.

During my first term, we proved our dedication to expanding our Recreation Department by adding over 30 new programs that accommodate all residents, regardless of neighborhood, age, or ability.

This year, we aim to continue to focus on inclusivity within Recreation Department by developing a number of important new programs

Currently, there is a lack of programming for young adults with special needs. Later this year, we plan to partner with the Board of Education to focus on an initiative that is specifically for special needs individuals who are over 18. This is an opportunity for us to fill a crucial gap in programming, which will have an important and positive impact on the lives of our residents.

Finding ways to build programs that are inclusive and diversified is one of our most important goals. Whether it is programs for girls living in the Heights or programs for special needs adults living Downtown, we want to ensure that there is an opportunity available to help empower and inspire all of our residents.

Happening in the background of these new parks and expanded recreation programs are the day-to-day government services that keep our roads paved, our garbage cleared, and our city running smoothly. While understandably less glamorous, these projects are the physical foundation of a functioning city, and we work each and every day to make sure our residents have safe and reliable infrastructure.

Just this week, with the help of Senator Cunningham and Senator Stack, we received an additional two million dollars from the State that we will use towards street paving in Jersey City and better bike lanes as part of the new Bike Master Plan. This year, we have scheduled some major paving efforts from MLK Drive, to Bergen Avenue, to Montgomery Street.

Along with the announcement of our new Bike Master Plan that occurred earlier this year, residents can expect some significant changes to our street infrastructure during 2018.

Improving city infrastructure is not just about paving streets though, but it is also about making important investments that have the power to change the community in big ways.

In just a few weeks, we will cut the ribbon on the new City Hall Annex in

Bergen-Lafayette. When I pushed this project in 2014, some members of the City Council were skeptical. Now that we will be moving into this building in a few short weeks, it is now clear that this was the right decision for Jersey City residents. We completed the entire building in 18 months. By comparison, the previous administration took thirteen years to build the West District Police Station. When we move in we will be saving over a million dollars in of rent in year one. It will also be a major change to the Ward F landscape by creating more activity and opportunity. This project is proof that we are doing more than speaking about progress, but also putting our money where our rhetoric is.

Once we complete the ribbon cutting in March, we will present phase two of this project to the City Council, which includes a second building next door to the current annex that will be used by both the community and city government, as well as a large parking deck to be used by the neighborhood. Our goal is to move a number of important city departments into the adjacent building, including a revamped affordable housing office.

We are working with Jersey City Together on the structure of this revamped office in order to increase the accessibility and efficiency of the City's affordable housing. We aim to bring affordable housing development, affordable housing compliance, and tenant advocacy under one umbrella in order to better facilitate services for residents. We will be working hand in hand with Jersey City Together on this initiative, and we look forward to bringing an ordinance before the City Council this year.

Clearly, we are committed to bringing new life to the HUB, and our investment in this area has already started to attract others. Last week, the JCRA helped to facilitate the closing of a building that will become the new and larger headquarters for Rising Tide Capital, which will be located directly next door to the City Hall Annex. I want to thank Alex and Alfa, who are here with us tonight, for their commitment to Jersey City and to this neighborhood.\*

However, it is not only infrastructure in Bergen-Lafayette that we are investing in, but its elsewhere in the city as well. We are currently finalizing plans to build a parking deck and police station in the Heights, we have recently taken steps to acquire the future home of the new Jersey City Museum and artist community space in Journal Square, and we are working toward building a new police station Downtown. Additionally, later this month, the Liberty Science Center will be putting forward their final site plan with the City to move on a 14-acre expansion of the Liberty Science Center.

As you can see, we are moving forward as a City by focusing on both small infrastructure issues and large projects that you see in every ward, every day.

I want to close tonight with a discussion on taxes. During the past four years, we have been one of the few municipalities that has seen stable taxes every single year while increasing city services. I cannot stress enough how important this balance is, and I am proud that we have been able to accomplish so much while remaining fiscally responsible. Our commitment to long-term budgeting has led us to four straight credit rating upgrades, which is something we as a City can celebrate.

Yet, it is not lost on me that the City is also undergoing a tax revaluation which has proven to be extremely difficult for many residents. It is no secret that I opposed this reval every step of the way during the past 4 years, not because I didn't think that balancing taxes was important, but rather, I opposed it because I knew it was going to be tremendously disruptive to long term residents and that we could be caught in a place that could force some residents of their homes. New Jersey law approaches revaluations in a way that provides very little flexibility to home owners or municipalities like Jersey City. Without frequent revaluations, the problem is compounded every year. This is made worse when one Mayor doesn't do a revaluation in a timely manner. In our case here in Jersey City, 25 years went by before the topic was even discussed. When that happens, it creates a situation where there is no good choice between doing a reval and not doing a reval. Ultimately, after 25 years, it leaves a city with two unfortunate choices-- choice "A", which is to conduct the reval, so that taxes are balanced but long term residents are forced out of their homes, or choice "B", which is to not conduct the reval, so that taxes remain imbalanced, but long term residents can stay in their homes.

With that said, the choice to undertake a reval was taken away from Jersey City last year when Governor Christie forced us to move forward. We have complied with this order, and we are committed to doing it in the fairest way we can. We have made information and data on this process more transparent than any other municipality in New Jersey ever has. If we are forced to do a revaluation, we will do it properly and carefully.

We are also aware that revaluations could potentially impact property values, and this concern is heightened by the new Trump tax plan that limits state and local tax deductions. As a result, tonight, I am letting residents know that in the next few weeks I will be putting forward a proposal before the City Council to conduct a second revaluation next year in order to account for the impacts to the market that may occur this year. I have discussed this with the reval company, and we will be able to do this at a fraction of the cost of the current reval since home inspectors have already been through the initial reval process. We will use any changes in the real estate market to balance out taxes next year to a fair level for the entire city based on sales that occur after this year's drastic changes in taxes. We are doing our best to make this difficult time as manageable as possible for residents because we don't want any resident to have to struggle

In closing, every day, every month, and every year, we are working towards a better Jersey City, where our residents are safe and our community can thrive. This year will be an important one for us, and I am excited to work together with you to bring these projects to life.

Perhaps you came here tonight to hear about a new public safety initiative, or you wanted to know more about our plans for the HUB, or maybe you are interested in our strategy to make affordable housing more accessible. Regardless of the neighborhood you live in, or what topics tonight were most relevant to you, I want to point out how important it is that you took the time to join us tonight. Running this City is a community effort, and I want to thank you for showing up, because it proves that you care about this city. Your voices are important, and we will continue to consider you, the community, as our biggest allies and most significant partners.

As Mayor, the most meaningful part of my job is having the opportunity to connect with residents on issues large and small. I have continued to prioritize communication and honesty between government and residents, and I hope you feel both appreciated and respected. Our work together is far from over, and this year, I hope to continue working together to build a better city for all.

Tonight, we discussed the future of our city, and over the next month, we will discuss the future of your neighborhoods as well. We will be hosting community meetings during the next few weeks in order to encourage residents to let us know what issues are most important to them in their respective neighborhoods.

I hope you leave here tonight feeling confident about the direction of your city, and the direction of our leadership. I hope you feel proud to live in Jersey City, and continue to play a role in the progress. Thank you for being here tonight, and God Bless Jersey City.