Good morning, and thank you. Sandy, thank you for that kind introduction. Your presence at this event and the work you do for our community mean so much to me. Everyone, please join me in giving Sandy Douglas another round of applause.  
  
It is my high honor to be here, as it is every year, to reflect on and recommit ourselves to the great responsibilities we have to our citizens, to our city and to one another. It is an honor to serve today, as it is every day, as your mayor.  
  
It was in the time of Ambassador Andrew Young, Robert Woodruff, and Reverend C.T. Vivian that Mayor Hartsfield called us “the city too busy to hate.” Today that is still true – and it is also true that our city is too busy to listen to long speeches, so I promise to keep my remarks shorter than last year’s.  
  
By any measure – citizens’ safety, financial strength, the rate at which we’re attracting businesses – we have accomplished as much as any administration in 40 years. After every milestone, after every success, we turned to the next challenge. We’ve turned back into the fire and kept pushing. Because we pushed together, we’ve known success together.   
  
I want to thank some of my partners in that success, many of whom are here today: the Atlanta City Council, led by President Ceasar Mitchell; Chief Judge Christopher Ward and members of the city’s judiciary; the City’s Consular Corps; Paul Bowers, Chairman of the Atlanta Committee for Progress; all the local elected officials with us this morning, and members of my cabinet and senior staff. Thank you for your teamwork. I cannot do this without you. I also want to thank each and every employee of the City of Atlanta. Thank you for your hard work.  
  
I’d like to recognize my wife, Sarah-Elizabeth. My parents, Junius and Sylvia Reed. My stepmother, Dr. Rogsbert Phillips-Reed. My mother-in-law, Susan Pease Langford. And my brothers and their better halves: Charles, Carlton and Joyce, and Tracy and Crystal. My family’s support makes all the difference to me.  
  
By any measure, our city is safer. With 2,000 police officers on the street, thousands of families feel safer in their neighborhoods. Crime is down 24 percent since the start of our first term, even after a very tough summer, and I know that number will be even better before we are done.  
  
By any measure, our city is financially stronger. In partnership with the Atlanta City Council and our employee unions, the City of Atlanta carved out a new path for pension reform, saving the city $270 million over ten years. This reform has withstood two legal challenges and was upheld by a unanimous vote of the Georgia Supreme Court.  
  
On my first day in office, we had just $7.4 million in the bank. Today we have $150 million.  
  
We have balanced the budget six consecutive times without any increase in property taxes – in fact, we’ve kept the rate flat or rolled it back. And the major credit rating agencies have taken notice, upgrading our credit seven times in a row.  
  
By any measure, our city is a more desirable destination, with more than 50 million visitors making us one of the four most visited cities in America, we have re-asserted our position as the dominant economy of the Southeast. Our housing market is rising again. We’ve created more jobs in this city’s limits and attracted more companies to relocate here than at any time in the past 30 years. Unemployment in the region was 10.2 percent when we started. It is less than 5.5 percent today. And Hartsfield Jackson Airport stands alone as the busiest passenger airport in the world handling 100 million passengers last year. Thank you, Delta. And thank you Richard Anderson.  
  
In 2015, we celebrated thirteen companies either moving their headquarters to Atlanta or making significant corporate expansions in the city. Two years ago, it was Coca Cola that led the way, moving hundreds of tech jobs back to North Avenue and to Peachtree Street. I want to recognize the Coca-Cola Company and its Chairman and CEO, Muhtar Kent, for believing in us, because when Coca-Cola leads, others follow. . .  
  
Business after business is choosing to make our hometown theirs.  
  
As they move in, jobs continue to grow. Our development authority, Invest Atlanta, had hoped to create 6,100 jobs last year. Well, we hit that number – by July – and then we exceeded it. By the end of the year we had created more than ten thousand new jobs. In fact, over the course of my Administration, our efforts have created 23,855 new direct jobs, with a total capital investment of $3.6 billion. And last year we had $2.9 billion worth of building and new construction permits, the highest in the City’s history.   
  
Now, it’s great to have companies choose the hub of the Southeast as the headquarters of their operations. But my friends, the question now is: What are we going to do with that success?  
  
Where do we steer this momentum to make ourselves worthy of it?  
  
How can we ensure that everyone shares in Atlanta’s prosperity?  
  
It’s not enough to cut ribbons if we’re not also continuing to cut crime, in every part of our city.  
  
It’s not enough to break ground on new buildings if we’re not also shattering glass ceilings and breaking barriers to opportunity.  
  
It’s not enough to see companies set up shop here if we don’t also set up the next generation for success.  
  
Atlanta doesn’t want just to be the place where our children grow up proud that their city has the busiest passenger airport in the world. We want that child to be proud that his city is too busy to let the block he grows up on determine whether his dreams can take flight.  
  
We don’t want to just be the place where a child grows up hoping to work at the great company in her hometown. We want that child to also dream about starting her own, at places like Switchyards and Tech Square Labs and Atlanta Tech Village.  
  
In my view, we need to take four steps to create a more inclusive and broader city and economy.  
  
First, we need to ensure that Atlanta prospers in the economy of the future.  
  
Second, we need to open access to higher education.   
  
Third, we need to keep our neighborhoods affordable and vibrant.   
Fourth, we need to support our city’s families.  
  
Let me tell you what we’re doing to succeed on these four fronts – and how, if we join together, we could do even more.   
  
First, we’re making Atlanta ready for the key ingredient of the economy of the future: technology.   
  
As we speak, Google Fiber is laying the technological groundwork for Atlanta’s economic growth.  
  
And Bill Nuti and NCR – the consumer technology giant – will soon open its new world headquarters in Midtown, right on Georgia Tech’s doorstep.   
  
We have to make sure our citizens get the skills they need to fill the jobs these companies and others are bringing to the city. And that starts with education – which is why expanding access to education is the second step we’re taking to create a more equitable Atlanta.   
  
I am so proud that last week the City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Board of Education came together to ensure both the Atlanta Public Schools and the Atlanta BeltLine have the resources they need to grow, and to serve our children and residents.  
  
Since this city is my home, her citizens are also my family. And when I hear the story of one of our neighbors who’s making it, that is what makes our accomplishments meaningful. When I meet our smart, striving and promising young Atlantans, I’m as gratified as if their successes were Maria Kristan’s.  
  
Young women like Tynesha Anderson, who grew up surrounded by crime on Campbellton Road. Her father’s heart gave out when she was just 12, and her mother’s path was derailed by drug abuse. But Tynesha studied, worked and saved. The Mayor’s Youth Scholarship Program helped her focus on her books more than her bills. By her sophomore year, Tynesha had five scholarships offering her more than $50,000 to pay for her studies.   
  
Today she’s not only the first in her family to graduate high school – and the first in her family to graduate college – but she did it with honors.   
  
I’m inspired by young men like Lance Bennett, who left Morehouse at the end of freshman year not knowing if he’d be able to afford to go back for his sophomore year. His parents stretched and made it possible until he, too, found the Mayor’s Youth Scholarship Program. Now he’s on the dean’s list, in an honor society, and getting ready to graduate this spring.  
  
If we really believe that the City of Atlanta is a special city, and a different kind of city, we need to make sure they have a fair shot and a fair shake.  
All my life I’ve met people who just wanted a fair chance. They never begrudged other people’s success. What they’ve always wanted is an equal opportunity, not a guarantee of an equal outcome. We’re going to do our part to make sure they have an equal opportunity.   
  
Because if you’re willing to study, we should put a book in your hands. If you’re willing to work, we’ll put some work and a job in your hands, we’ll put a paycheck in your hands. And if you stick with it, we will work with you to put your future back in your hands. To put a dream back in your hands.   
  
In keeping with that same spirit, today I will ask the Atlanta City Council to transfer the ten priority deeds for properties of interest to the Atlanta Public School System, right away.   
  
I’m also inspired by those among us who know it’s never too late to learn in this life. We’re familiar with the story of someone who goes to a great Atlanta university and then maybe they end up in City Hall – trust me, I’m lucky to work with a lot of them. Well, Darryl Moore did it the other way around.   
  
He worked in the kitchen at City Hall – I would see him there all the time. He got there through the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency, which connects businesses with hard workers looking for jobs. And in the course of doing his job, Darryl realized that what he really wants is a career. Today, he is enrolled in a bachelor’s degree program after earning his certification in project management from Georgia Tech.

Believe me, our city can be full of inspiring stories like Darryl’s. We just have to keep helping.  
  
To make sure the brightest inventions and innovations are born in our city, we’re supporting entrepreneurs who want to start their own companies. Last year, I promised we would have a sharper focus on supporting women entrepreneurs. This year, in the Flatiron Building just down the street from here, our city’s oldest skyscraper, our entrepreneurs are dreaming the newest dreams, giving life to grand ideas that are changing our community and our world. That includes a talented group of innovators from the new Women’s Entrepreneurship Initiative.   
  
I am thrilled to announce the inaugural class of women who through this program will receive mentorship, business coaching and access to technology and office space. Will the women of the WEI Class of 2016 please stand and be recognized by the City of Atlanta?  
  
Congratulations to all of you.   
  
I’m also excited about the nation’s first film training partnership program, which is happening right here in Atlanta. We’re getting local residents work on the sets of movies and TV shows, one of our economy’s fastest growing industries. We are training the next generation of leaders in this business, which will help to drive our state and local economy for decades to come.   
  
Our investments are paying off. The film and entertainment industry is a $6 billion business for our city and region. We have been called the Hollywood of the East, because our city is number three in the country for our film and television business and number five in the world. And two weeks ago, moviemaker.com named Atlanta the best big city to live and work in for moviemakers.   
  
Atlanta isn’t satisfied just to lead our region and country in the traditional ways. But we’re also going to lead on the most important challenges facing all of us: a warming planet.  
A few weeks ago I was in Paris for the historic climate conference. I joined more than 100 mayors from across the world – and I’m proud to say I was the only mayor of a Southern city calling for bold change.  
  
We’re doing our part here at home to answer our moral obligation and build the clean energy economy that is necessary to cool our planet. We’ve launched a new program to install low-cost solar panels on our city’s buildings, we’re a leader in a national effort to conserve water and energy and we have reduced our water consumption by 20 percent, and we’re one of only four cities in the nation with an Urban Agriculture Director who is working to solve the crisis of food deserts and rebuilding the connections between our communities and our land.   
  
Today, others from around the world have taken note of our leadership. We’re not just a destination for businesses from around the country – but also for immigrants from around the world, with the second fastest growing foreign born population in America.   
Here in the cradle of the Civil Rights movement, we have to recognize that our city’s strength comes from our diversity and resist the plagues of fear and division. And act against and stand up to those who have amnesia and refuse to recall a time when “we were them.”   
  
Our Welcoming Atlanta initiative appreciates the entrepreneurial spirit many immigrants bring with them to our city. They become deeply involved in our community, investing their time, money and hopes where they live.   
  
The excitement of the future is knowing that it looks different from the past – and that we have the power to shape it. We certainly shouldn’t fear it. I believe our immigrant community is essential to building the Atlanta of the future, rooted in our unique and deep history.   
  
The third thing that we must to do to create a more inclusive Atlanta is strengthen our neighborhoods.   
  
That’s why I’m committed to an inclusionary zoning effort. It might be controversial for a city like Atlanta – but it’s the right thing to do.  
  
Between the City, the Atlanta Housing Authority and the Land Bank Authority, we can hedge against rising rental and home prices in prime real estate areas and secure more affordable housing that will strengthen our schools, businesses, and neighborhoods.  
  
But we cannot do it alone. So today I call on our partners in Fulton County to commit to affordable housing. I’m asking the Fulton County Commission to ensure that any time public dollars are used to subsidize a housing development in Atlanta that there is a guaranteed component for affordable housing.   
  
If public funds are required for a project to move forward, then teachers, fire fighters, police officers and the people who keep our city running on a day to day basis should be able to live there.   
  
This needs to change not now but right now.   
  
When we work together, we can do more. Community matters. These are the values that drive me to strengthen our neighborhoods by creating spaces where kids can keep active and healthy outside of school. We’ve re-opened 33 recreation centers and 16 Centers of Hope in my administration that support them academically, strengthen them physically, and help them develop character and leadership skills. Last year, we provided 65,000 hot meals that our young people might not get at home.   
  
It’s no coincidence that as the doors to these centers opened up, teen crime rates went down. The Centers of Hope aren’t just serving our youngest – they’re also helping save some of them.  
  
Before we are done we’ll reopen the new Martin Luther King Natatorium in the Historic Old Fourth Ward – a world-class facility that also will ensure more spaces bearing Dr. King’s name are positive places that appropriately honor his legacy. And I will make sure that the M.L. King Drive in the City of Atlanta is the best M.L. King Drive in the country. To back up my words, we are launching a $40 million effort to improve the corridor.   
  
The fourth thing we have to do to ensure that everyone in our city can succeed is support families.   
  
I’m pleased to announce that within the next 120 days, the City of Atlanta will launch a Comprehensive Center for Fathers that mentors young men, helps them grow their strengths in parenting, math, reading and other life skills, offers individual counseling and support groups, father-child activities, and job services.  
  
Our community and our country need this. One in three children in America grows up without a father in their home, and those children are four times more likely than their peers to live in poverty.  
  
This is an investment worth making to ensure there will be more dads, like the one I’m blessed to have, who know the pride of watching promise meet achievement.  
  
When our daughter was born, I saw firsthand how important it is for a newborn child to have a loving parent with her for the first weeks and months of her life. So as a city, we also need to bring our leave policies in line with good parenting.   
  
That’s why I was so proud to make Atlanta the first local government in Georgia to offer six weeks paid parental leave for mothers and primary caregivers. I am going to push and I hope others will encourage other governments and private businesses follow suit. Because if we want families to be proud to call Atlanta home their entire lives, we have to do right by them from the earliest days of their lives. . .  
We can stand up for families by standing up for our women workers. This year, we will achieve our goal of making sure every woman employee of the City of Atlanta receives equal pay for equal work. It’s 2016, Atlanta, and it’s time.  
  
Atlanta, our city is ascendant. But we should not be surprised. My friends, our great city was built on ashes – and not once, but twice. So imagine what we can do when we build on this success, now that the state of our city is strong again.  
  
Every day, I draw hope from all of you.  
  
That’s why I’m as energized and optimistic today as the day you gave me the gift of the public trust and made me your mayor.  
  
That’s why, after 2,222 days in this job, I still believe in Atlanta and I believe in all of you.   
  
Reverend C.T. Vivian said once that each great achievement demands an even greater achievement. That’s why we have such great plans for this city this year, building on all that has been accomplished until now. That’s why we have no plans to stop.   
  
That’s how we’ll make ourselves worthy of our progress. It’s what we owe our future and those who will inherit it.   
  
Four years ago, I asked you to come with me. Today, I ask you to stay with me as we keep moving forward in this most promising journey, in this most promising moment.  
  
I hope you’re still ready to go.  
  
I am.  
  
Thank you, and God Bless you.