

*Mayor*  
*Jerramiah T. Healy*



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6:00PM

CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS

280 GROVE STREET

JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY

Members of the City Council, Senators and Assemblymen, County Executive, Freeholders, reverend clergy, community leaders and members of the public, good evening. Tonight I will talk about the progress that Jersey City has made and continues to make. We are a world class city, a leader in job creation and public safety, at the forefront of creating green and sustainable communities, and a place that I and everyone I meet who lives here is proud to call home.

As you have heard me say before, the top priority of any government is the public safety of its citizens. I am proud to report that thanks to the hard work and bravery of the men and women of the Jersey City Police Department, our City continues to get safer every year and we are committed to keeping this progress going.

Last year, we had the lowest number of homicides in Jersey City since 1969, the earliest year for which records are available. We also had the lowest amount of motor vehicle thefts on record last year and the lowest number of larcenies since 1974. In 2012, there was a 4 percent decrease in violent crime from the prior year, as well as a 3 percent drop in non-violent crime.

To get an idea of how much safer our city has become, consider that compared to 20 years ago, robberies have gone down by three times, aggravated assaults have been reduced by nearly half and burglaries have gone down by 31 percent.

But it is not just statistics we are concerned with. The reality is – the more police you see, the safer you feel. That is why last year, during this address, I instructed Police Chief Thomas Comey to immediately look at ways to re-deploy additional uniformed officers in marked cars to the areas in greatest need to provide a more visible street presence. The Police Chief and I also conducted town hall meetings in each of the city's four Police Districts to hear directly from our community. Overwhelmingly, the request was for more foot patrols. But at the time, our police department was suffering a loss in personnel due to the significant number of retirements. While we had negotiated successfully to avoid the layoff of police officers and firefighters that almost every other large city in the state and the nation was forced to undergo – we were still facing a challenge.

In this case, we needed additional police officers and the grant funding to hire them. While Jersey City had applied year after year for COPS funding through the U.S. Department of Justice, we had not been successful recently due to our low crime stats.

To succeed at this challenge, it took the collective effort of the police department and the community. A winning partnership was created and spearheaded by community activists Esther Wintner and Riaz Wahid, who I would like to acknowledge. Esther and Riaz please stand for recognition.

Esther and Riaz, both busy professionals, took it upon themselves to lead a letter-signing campaign to our Congressional delegation to encourage the Justice Department to grant Jersey City COPS funding. As a result of our collaborative efforts, Jersey City was awarded \$1.85 million through the COPS hiring program to hire 15 new officers. We allocated additional funds from our city budget to hire a total of 22 officers who were sworn in in December. Earlier in the year, in April, we hired another 13 officers through lateral transfers from other police departments. With all of these new hires, the Police Department now has a total of 802 sworn officers, and the new officers are assigned to walking posts throughout our city.

Some of the new officers are with us here tonight, and I would like to take a moment to acknowledge these brave young men and women who protect us each and every day. Officers, please stand for acknowledgement.

My pledge to you tonight is that my office and the Police Department will continue to find grant funding to hire an additional 50 police officers in 2013.

Another accomplishment this year was the installation of Phase III of our CCTV – or crime cameras – along West Side Avenue, in Bergen-Lafayette, and parts of Downtown and The Heights. This is the third phase of this successful program that has been credited with not only crime prevention, but also convictions.

These 59 new CCTV cameras have all been installed, and the entire system will be completed and turned over to the Police Department by the end of next month.

This year, our entire nation suffered one of our darkest moments when 20 first graders and six faculty members were gunned down and murdered in their Sandy Hook Elementary School classroom in Newtown, Connecticut. As the news unfolded, we all grieved with the parents, the family members and the entire Newtown community. And we all asked, “Why?” “How could this happen?” “And what can we do to prevent this from EVER happening again?”

A few weeks ago, as the national dialogue on gun control began to grow, we organized a rally here in Jersey City with the newly-formed group, One Million Moms for Gun Control – New Jersey Chapter. It was a frigid Saturday morning in Lincoln Park, but there were more than 200 concerned citizens from across New Jersey and more than a dozen federal, state and local elected officials who all came together to send a message to Washington: Enough is enough. The time to act is now.

Sensible gun legislation is within our reach and, as I said earlier, it is the primary duty of all levels of government to protect its citizens. For nearly a decade, I have been advocating for common sense gun legislation at the federal level as “this is a federal plague that requires a federal cure.” As a charter member of Mayors Against Illegal Guns – a gun control advocacy group formed by New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg and Boston Mayor Tom Menino – I have taken bold steps in Jersey City to develop sensible gun legislation. In fact, it was legislation crafted by this administration that became the model for a statewide “One Handgun a Month” bill that passed at the state level and was signed into law by then Governor Corzine.

As President Obama said recently on the matter of gun control, “Changing the status quo is never easy. This will be no exception.” We stand with the President on this important issue and are willing to fight this difficult battle as it is the right thing to do.

Some of the measures we support are the reinstatement of the assault weapons ban, background checks for all gun purchases to close the gun show loophole, and a ban on high capacity magazines.

Last year, we continued the successful Operation Lifesaver gun buyback program – funded entirely by donations from private corporations and residents and not a single

taxpayer dollar – that we first began back in 2005. To date, we have removed nearly 1,500 firearms from the homes and streets of Jersey City. I was honored and grateful when a local corporation, Sims Metal Management, which employs 250 Jersey City residents, reached out to my office recently to see if they could help with the gun buyback program. Sims has generously donated \$20,000 to the gun buyback program and we will hold another series of buybacks utilizing that funding in the spring. I would also like to thank Peter Kelly and Hudson Hospital Opco LLC, who last week donated \$5,000 to our gun buyback program.

Just last week, I spoke before the New Jersey Assembly Law & Public Safety Committee regarding proposed legislation to reduce gun violence in our state, and I pledge to you that I will continue to be a passionate advocate in Trenton and Washington D.C. for stronger gun laws so that we can put an end to this senseless loss of life.

In 2012, the brave men and women of the Jersey City Police Department responded to 111,629 calls for service, made 9,862 arrests and seized 292 guns from the City streets – in addition to the weapons recovered from the gun buyback program.

Our Jersey City Fire Department had another busy year, having responded to 23,447 calls for assistance, which included 9,414 EMS calls, 165 HazMat incidents, 1,199 structure fires, 37 multiple-alarm fires, 75 car fires, and 5,228 false alarms. In 2012, the Fire Prevention Division conducted 6,744 fire inspections and collected \$435,700 in fines and permit fees, and our Fire Department continued a free, grant funded give-away program for smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to Jersey City residents.

Just like we continue to fight for sensible gun legislation, we also continue to litigate the construction of the high-pressure Spectra Energy natural gas pipeline. While Spectra has already begun construction, the City of Jersey City has appealed the decision of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in federal circuit court in Washington, D.C.

As we did with the COPS grant, in these difficult economic times, we must look for revenue sources other than the taxpayers.

Over the course of the past three years, our city has been cut drastically in state aid. But despite these challenges, we continue to succeed. While many other cities across the nation faced downgrades and bankruptcies, Jersey City has continued to stabilize taxes and achieve recognition from Moody's Financial Services.

Here is what Moody's said: "Jersey City's financial position has improved through successful efforts to raise additional recurring revenue while reducing ongoing personnel related expenditures."

According to Moody's, "The city's improved financial position with structurally balanced operations, dramatically increased wealth levels and strong prospects for continued tax base growth" were amongst the reasons for the upgrade from a negative rating to a positive.

As we move forward, we will continue to operate in a fiscally responsible manner. I am pleased that we were able to stabilize taxes over the course of the past two years, and my administration is committed to working with the City Council to pass a budget in 2013 that does not increase taxes, yet maintains the same high level of services. Next week, I will present the administration's budget to the City Council.

Last year, as part of the annual budget presentation, we presented a three year strategic plan to serve as a framework for municipal operations that established three major goals: 1) a stable tax rate and an effective and efficient government, 2) a safe and livable community, and 3) a sustainable environment. Throughout the year, we have been meeting with the department directors to ensure that the new programs and policies being developed incorporate these guiding principles. An example is the consolidation of dispatch operations at our Bishop Street Public Safety Communications Center.

Last year, we discussed the possibility of the consolidation of other municipal services. They were the creation of a Department of Public Safety; the merger of the Parking Authority into the Police Department; and the consolidation of the Department of Public Works with the Jersey City Incinerator Authority.

A comprehensive analysis was conducted of DPW and JCIA, and it was determined that each has a distinct function. And while there may be some cost savings from merging the two, they would be minimal and the significant loss of efficiencies would outweigh any benefit. While conducting the analysis, we worked to make sure that both entities were operating in the most efficient manner possible. Indeed, as a result of these efforts, both operations are working with fewer employees and the JCIA car pound has been privatized and is now a source of revenue for our city.

After a comprehensive review and analysis of the police and fire operations, it was determined that the functions of each are too specialized to be merged without suffering significant losses in the functionality of both operations. Also, a review of the merger of the Parking Authority into the city's Police Department would not achieve enough savings to justify dismantling that agency.

And while we continue to streamline and make government more efficient, we are still providing solid services for our residents. In fact, in 2012, the administration filled 10,300 potholes and paved 75 miles of streets as part of our street resurfacing program. In 2013, the Department of Public Works will continue its aggressive pothole and street paving program.

In our commitment to the environment, we are constructing sustainable municipal buildings. One is the new facility to house the DPW and JCIA currently under construction on Linden Avenue. This new building will be of the highest environmental standard achievable – LEED Platinum – and will include a green roof and solar panel covered garages that will reduce the amount of energy we consume, thereby reducing our energy costs.

We also continue to make progress on our new West District. This building will reach a LEED Silver standard and will provide a much deserved new home for the police officers who serve us so well in the West District.

While we have committed to building sustainable municipal buildings, we have also made it a priority to keep our neighborhoods strong and free of urban blight. As our homeowners and business owners continue to invest in their properties and improve their

neighborhoods, we have not turned a blind eye to those who have let their property deteriorate.

Abandoned and vacant buildings are not only unsightly, but they also attract criminal activity. My administration will continue to put delinquent property owners on notice and will take whatever action necessary to remediate these eyesores and restore them to the tax rolls.

In late 2011, the City took the bold step of publishing the 56 worst abandoned properties, and while many property owners have worked with the city to renovate and remediate the conditions, others have not. We are now in the process of legally acquiring some of the worst abandoned properties. The City will then rehabilitate those properties and return them to the tax rolls.

Tonight, I am pleased to report that due to aggressive enforcement by the Division of Housing Code Enforcement on the most negligent property owners, 813 vacant buildings have been registered. A total of \$248,750 in registration fees has been collected, as well as more than \$100,000 in fines and violations.

As we strengthen our neighborhoods, we have made the creation of parks and the restoration of existing parks a priority and we outlined this goal in our Parks Master Plan. This year, we will continue the progress we've made restoring our beautiful city parks as we have done in recent years at Hamilton, Audubon, and Ercel Webb Parks.

Last May, there was the completion of the extraordinary \$4.2 million renovation of Bayside Park on Garfield Avenue. This park now contains new tennis courts, playing fields and shaded areas where people can relax with some of the most stunning views of the New York Harbor, the Statue of Liberty, and lower Manhattan. This park is not only a great amenity for the people of Greenville, but for everyone in Jersey City.

We recently announced our plan to completely renovate and improve the Fulton Avenue Park off of Martin Luther King Drive in Ward F. With more than \$400,000 from the PPG settlement, we will turn what is currently an eyesore into a green, peaceful neighborhood

park where the community can enjoy passive recreation.

Not far from Fulton Avenue Park, we are currently in the midst of an \$875,000 comprehensive redesign of the Muhammad Ali Park on Van Nostrand Avenue between Ocean and Garfield Avenues. We anticipate opening Muhammad Ali Park this summer, which will provide playgrounds for children and brand new basketball courts.

Another project that we have worked hard to bring to the finish line is the 100 Steps Project. This project involves the construction of a steel stairway descending from Franklin Street to Mountain Road to Paterson Plank Road. The project intends to restore the original “Franklin Street Steps,” which were built more than a century ago and torn down in the ‘90s. The new stairs will provide easier access between the Jersey City Heights and the Hoboken Light Rail station. We expect construction to start by early spring and hope to have the stairs open by early fall.

This year we also undertook much-needed renovations to our Pershing Field Pool, and while that facility has been closed, our seniors have been able to swim at the St. Peter’s University Pool and at some of the Board of Education facilities. The nearly half million dollar renovations are anticipated to be complete by April.

In Jersey City, we are also building new parks. Adding more green spaces in the heart of the city not only improves the aesthetics, but also provides more areas for our youth to recreate.

This past summer we broke ground on Berry Lane Park, a 17-acre park in the heart of Bergen Lafayette. Berry Lane Park is an extraordinary transformation from a brownfield to a greenfield. Thanks to Jersey City’s efforts, PPG Industries entered into a settlement of litigation pursuant to which they agreed to pay for the remediation of chromium contamination at this site. I am proud to say that the last chromium contaminated soil will be removed from Berry Lane by the end of this month. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also provided millions of dollars to the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency to cover the cost of remediation of other non-chromium contamination. The Redevelopment Agency was also able to utilize hundreds of thousands of dollars from the PPG settlement to acquire the

necessary parcels to make the long held vision of a new park in the heart of Ward F a reality.

We also continue to work with the Reservoir Preservation Alliance and the Embankment Preservation Coalition to preserve and restore both historic sites.

Last year, the State of New Jersey awarded Jersey City and our non-profit partner, the Hackensack Riverkeeper, an \$800,000 Green Acres Grant to help us build The Skyway Park on the Hackensack River, where the former PJP landfill was. This \$800,000 was in addition to the \$2.1 million that the City had already received from the Hudson County Open Space trust fund and \$4 million dollars from the Port Authority. We are currently finalizing the design plan which will be presented to the public this spring.

We are also proud that the NJ DEP has given final approval of the remediation and we anticipate that the U.S. EPA will remove this site from the National Priorities List and declassify it as a superfund site, marking an official end to a legacy of pollution and starting a new chapter in restoring our western waterfront.

In furtherance of my green agenda and 365 Days of Green Campaign, last year, we also unveiled a comprehensive bike program that includes the installation of a new network of 35.2 miles of striped bike lanes. Also, the plan includes an additional 19.5 miles of shared lanes – for a total of 54.7 miles. Other components of the bike plan include major revisions to bike riding ordinances, new zoning requirements for bike parking, a Bike Rack Sponsorship, and a Safe Cycling Education and Enforcement Campaign.

Recreation is vital to the quality of life and has been a focal point of my administration. Each year, we expand our recreation program to reflect the growth and diversity of our city. Whether that has meant constructing new pools, expanding our soccer program, providing tennis clinics in parks in each corner of the city, or developing a boxing program for our youth, we are committed to providing our residents, young and old, with positive recreational programs.

In 2012, our successful co-ed NFL Youth Flag Football program was expanded to additional locations, and we hosted the Northeast NFL Flag Tournament in November. Our

popular Youth Soccer program grew tremendously last year and is now conducted year-round with indoor and outdoor locations, with several hundred youth between the ages of 6 and 14 participating.

Our Aquatics program continues to conduct free “Learn to Swim” classes and last year more than 1,000 children successfully completed this course. Our residents, in record numbers, continue to enjoy the Lafayette Pool & Aquatic Center on Johnston Avenue and Van Horne Street and the Pavonia Avenue pool in addition to our indoor locations.

The Special Needs Recreation Program participated in the New Jersey State Special Olympics competition, and we continue to partner with the U.S. Tennis Association to offer free tennis lessons to our youth at various park locations. We expanded and added programs and activities at the Jersey City Armory, and as demand continues to grow for the Jersey City youth track program, we continue to work with the State Department of Veterans and Military Affairs to offer programs at this site.

As I pledged last year, the Recreation Department has developed a boxing and fitness program for city youth that will be unveiled in the coming months. Currently, we are finalizing a “blue print” to renovate the old Harmon Street Pool Facility to conduct this activity, which we know will be in high-demand.

Last year I pledged to appoint a representative of my office to work with the Health Department and the Recreation Department, as well as the Board of Education, to develop a youth fitness and health program to encourage an active lifestyle and healthy eating habits for our youngsters. This working group has developed what we feel will be a successful program and we are currently discussing with the new Superintendent how and when to best launch this initiative.

We continue to strengthen partnerships with city schools, the Boys and Girls Club, and the Police Activity League. Also we assist local little leagues, soccer organizations, lacrosse teams and cricket clubs, and seek outside grant funding from organizations such as the NFL Grassroots Youth Football Fund, Major League Baseball, and the U.S. Tennis Association. Each

year, we review the fees for our recreational programs with a goal of keeping our fees affordable for all of our citizens.

Tonight, we are fortunate to have with us one of our dedicated little league coaches, Louis Lee, who for the past decade or more has volunteered his time to teach baseball to young boys and girls at the Greenville American/Cal Ripkin Little League. Here with him is one of our young athletes, Emily Borowski. Louis and Emily please stand for recognition.

One of the ways that we keep these programs both affordable and expanding is by growing our tax base. We do that by attracting new business to our city and by the thousands of small businesses that line our main streets. Although there have certainly been challenges in recent years, we continue to be a magnet for investment and development. Both commercial and residential construction has continued throughout our city, bringing construction jobs and permanent jobs for our residents.

In conjunction with the Christie Administration, we were happy to break ground this year on the new Goya Foods Distribution Center and global headquarters. Additionally, Goya will pay the city approximately \$1.3 million in annual payments in lieu of taxes that will be utilized to offset the burden of property taxes on our home owners. The project has created more than 150 construction jobs and will bring close to 500 permanent jobs to Jersey City.

Manufacturing jobs like these at Goya are important for our city, as are the 250 jobs at Sims Metal Management on Linden Avenue East, and others like them. In late fall of 2012, Prologis began construction of the “Pulaski Distribution Center” on Route 1 & 9. The 883,000-square-foot warehouse is on schedule to be completed by next April. This project will create 250 construction jobs and once the warehouse opens, there will be 375 full-time, permanent jobs to start.

Almost every week, I am invited to cut the ribbon on a new, small business that is opening in our city. Not only is it an honor to preside over these ceremonies, but it is truly rewarding to see the impact these businesses have on the lives of our residents.

Each of these businesses – whether it be a new pizzeria, spa, market, or boutique – brings with it a service to the city. They also bring jobs for local residents. In 2012, more than 35 new businesses opened creating 654 local jobs.

While you often hear about the Fortune 500 companies relocating to Jersey City, and we're thrilled to have them, we know that small businesses are still the backbone of our economy. Our Jersey City Economic Development Corporation works closely with businesses looking to relocate to Jersey City, as well as those who are already here. The EDC also offers programs to help retain businesses along our main streets.

One industry in particular that has had an outstanding record of hiring local residents is the hotel industry. For example, the Hyatt currently employs 220 people and the Westin has 399 employees, and many of these individuals are Jersey City residents.

The financial services icon, the Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation (DTCC), also completed renovation of 570 Washington Boulevard in Newport, and we welcomed 1,000 new DTCC employees to Jersey City in late fall. Eight hundred more will move in by the end of this month.

The employees in our financial services sector help support our local economy, by spending hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in the shops, restaurants, and hotels in our city, which in turn supports the creation of jobs in our city.

As our commercial development continues to thrive, so too does our residential development, which also creates construction jobs and permanent jobs.

In 2012, we saw the completion of the city's first LEED-certified residential tower at 198 Van Vorst Street with 131 rental units and 4,426 square feet of retail. Also in 2012, an additional 150 market rate units were created with another 8,000 square feet of retail space. This year, more than 1,000 residential units are already under construction in various parts of the city, along with 25,000 square feet of retail space.

As each of these buildings comes online, tax dollars are added to the city coffers, neighborhoods are enriched, and jobs are created for our citizens.

Our Housing Authority and Redevelopment Agency have begun implementing a complete transformation of the McGinley Square corridor, including the Montgomery Gardens housing complex, which will result in an 887-unit mixed income, mixed use neighborhood. The transformed area will feature a new preschool and early childhood education center, as well as other amenities such as a new gym and auditorium, a mega-supermarket, and more.

In 2012, there were seven affordable housing units completed and 10 emerging market rate units completed. There are 347 affordable housing units underway and 145 emerging market/market rate units underway as part of affordable housing developments. In addition, there are 338 affordable housing units in planning and 35 emerging market/market rate units in planning. The most recent ground breakings were Jackson Green, with 22 units, the Garden State Episcopal CDC at 242 Bergen Avenue, with 12 units, and 291 – 297 Halladay Street, with eight units.

As the great humanitarian Mother Teresa said, “I know God will not give me anything I can’t handle. I just wish that He didn’t trust me so much.” And such is the feeling that came over us as Hurricane Sandy barreled down on Jersey City with a force and impact never before seen in our area. While a year earlier Hurricane Irene delivered a significant blow to our city, Super Storm Sandy was much more severe.

There isn’t a single person in Jersey City who wasn’t affected. I am pleased to say that in the three and a half months since the historic storm, *most* of Jersey City is back to normal. There are, however, dozens of homeowners and business owners – those most severely impacted – for whom it will be some time before a sense of normalcy returns. In many cases, they have been unable to move back to their residences, have lost their business or their jobs, and are still seriously struggling. Several city departments and agencies, including the Office of Emergency Management, the Office of Employment and Training, and our Department of Health & Human Services, continue to work with residents struggling in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

The Jersey City Office of Emergency Management staff worked around the clock and side-by-side with the Police Department, the Fire Department, the Department of Public

Works, the Recreation Department, the Incinerator Authority, the Municipal Utilities Authority, the Parking Authority, and numerous other municipal agencies to provide assistance to Jersey City residents during and after the hurricane.

At this time, I would like to recognize our OEM Director Greg Kierce, as a representative of all the public safety and civilian personnel, whose valiant efforts ensured the safety of our residents during Hurricane Sandy. Greg please stand and be recognized.

During the height of the storm in the early morning hours of Oct. 30th, President Barack Obama called me at home to express his concern for our area and to pledge support from the federal government. Right after the storm, President Obama sent representatives to Jersey City to survey the damage, and FEMA representatives have staffed a Disaster Recovery Center here for more than three months.

In Jersey City, more than 6,100 residential housing units throughout the city sustained moderate to severe damages due to storm related flooding. The hardest hit areas include Country Village, Society Hill and the Port Liberte housing complexes, as well as most of Downtown and the Hudson River waterfront. Almost the entire city lost power, with many residents not having gas and electricity restored for more than a week. In the worst cases, power was out for two weeks.

While we are still waiting for final reports from FEMA, we do know that the costs associated with Hurricane Sandy could easily approach \$100 million for all of Jersey City. The cost associated with damages to city-owned property and equipment alone is estimated at approximately \$23 million. Presently, FEMA covers 75 percent of replacement costs, however, the Mayor's Office is working with the Governor's office to lobby Washington to have that changed to 90 or 100 percent. In fact, just last week, we met in Trenton with the Governor's staff to discuss this matter as well as the redrawing of flood maps and how urban areas such as Jersey City and Hoboken need a different set of guidelines than those of suburban or coastal areas.

As I mentioned before, many of our businesses were significantly impacted, in some cases, destroyed, by Hurricane Sandy. In our new, Liberty Harbor North development, the businesses there sustained severe damage.

About a month after the storm, we had the opportunity to visit Serenity Day Spa with representatives of the U.S. Small Business Administration, who – along with FEMA –assisted residents and business owners in rebuilding. In the case of Serenity, which had opened its doors just six months before Hurricane Sandy struck, the damage exceeded \$200,000 and the devastation was heartbreaking. I spoke with the owner, Marilyn Diane Phillips, who is here with us tonight, as she discussed how the SBA was able to help her reconstruct her business and get her back on her feet. It wasn't easy, and we appreciate her fortitude and determination to stay here and conduct business in Jersey City. Ms. Phillips, please stand for recognition.

The City is working as quickly as possible to repair damages to parks and public places that were damaged by the hurricane. The footbridge from Jersey Avenue into Liberty State Park that was washed away is being fast-tracked for repair, and earlier this month a resolution was passed by the City Council to authorize the design work. We are hopeful that installation of the new bridge can be complete by late spring/early summer.

While Hurricane Sandy brought much destruction, there was something positive that came out of the disaster – seeing so many neighbors stepping up to help other neighbors during trying times. This has only reinforced my love and concern for our great city and all of our good citizens. It is a testament to our city and the people who live here. During the storm, I visited every neighborhood in our city and heard from so many of you, and want everyone to know how truly inspired I am by the will and humanity of our people.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is clear that Jersey City is getting safer, becoming more fiscally sound and that we are making real progress. Some of you may have read the recent *Jersey City Reporter* article about how today, compared to four years ago, more and more families are choosing to stay in Jersey City to raise their children, as opposed to relocating to the suburbs. This positive trend has really been growing for the past decade or so, and I know the good

work we have done has contributed to this. Our parks are better, our streets are safer and cleaner, and we continue to bring development to our city to grow our tax base.

As many of you know, I am one of those people who chose to raise my family in Jersey City. They all still live here, and are raising their children here. When I look and see the progress we are making, I see a better city not just for my grandchildren but for all of the children in our city. I always put Jersey City first and I am committed to working every day to advance our city for all of us.