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**MAYOR BLOOMBERG DELIVERS 2012 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS –  
NYC: CAPITAL OF INNOVATION**

*The following is the text of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg’s 2012 State of the City address as prepared for delivery at Morris High School in the Bronx. Please check against delivery.*

“Thank you. Mayors Koch and Dinkins, Speaker Quinn and Minority Leader Oddo, Public Advocate De Blasio, Comptroller Liu, Borough Presidents, District Attorneys, members of the City Council and State Legislature, my fellow New Yorkers – it’s great to be in the Bronx.

“This is the birthplace of legends like Justice Sonia Sotomayor and the workplace of legends like Mariano Rivera. And it’s also the home of future superstars like every member of The Celia Cruz High School Latin Band, the PS 32 Chorus and the Keltic Dreams Irish Dancers. Weren’t they fantastic?

“In a city that is the ‘Capital of Innovation’ – this one borough has given us some of the world’s great authors, artists and architects, not to mention the pioneers of hip-hop and salsa.

“The Bronx has always been a borough of innovators and we can see it most recently in the students here at the Academy for Collaborative Studies, who built an award-winning robot. How about the Robot Club?

“It’s an honor to be introduced by a teacher like Ishmael Kamara, what an inspirational story, and by Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., who we’ve been glad to work with on so many projects. And it’s a pleasure to be here at Gouverneur Morris High School Campus.

“In case you don’t recall Senator Gouverneur Morris from American history class, he was a Founding Father from this section of the Bronx – hence ‘Morrissania’ – and he’s credited with drafting much of the U.S. Constitution, including the phrase that still defines the spirit of our great nation: We the people.

“That’s the spirit that has defined our work here in New York City over the past decade and allowed us to accomplish great things.

(more)

“For instance, in 2011, we said we’d fight to make marriage equality a reality across the state. And thanks to the leadership of Governor Cuomo and both parties of the Legislature, and the hard work of my Chief Policy Advisor John Feinblatt – we did. Today, New Yorkers are free to marry the person they love.

“In 2011, we said we’d work with the State to bring taxi service to all five boroughs. And again, thanks to the Governor and legislative leaders, especially Bronx Assemblyman Carl Heastie, and also David Yassky and Micah Lasher – we did.

“We said we’d launch a new East River ferry service, balance the budget and hold the line on taxes. And in partnership with Speaker Christine Quinn and the City Council – we did.

“We said we’d make New York City safer and healthier than ever and with Commissioners Kelly, Cassano, Farley and Sadik-Khan leading the way, we did. In 2011, we had the lowest traffic fatalities in history, near record lows in crime and fire fatalities and life expectancy rates that are far surpassing the nation.

“We said we’d place a record number of New Yorkers in jobs and with Commissioner Rob Walsh leading our Small Business Services team, we did.

“We said we’d launch the most comprehensive effort to connect black and Latino young men to jobs and education, and thanks to Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs and our commissioners, and the support we received from George Soros, we did.

“We said we’d seek to attract a world-class university to build a new science and engineering campus here – the brainchild of EDC President Seth Pinsky and Deputy Mayor Bob Steel – and we did.

“We said we’d open the new section of the High Line, break ground on the new Whitney Museum and complete the expansion of the Museum of the Moving Image, and because of the leadership of Commissioners Amanda Burden, Kate Levin and Katherine Oliver, we did.

“And we said we’d open the 9/11 Memorial in time for the 10th anniversary of the attacks, and thanks to a great American who served this country in World War II and has served our country and our city ever since – John Whitehead – we did.

“Thanks to all these leaders, and so many other members of the city’s outstanding workforce and all of our partners in the private sector. We accomplished big things in 2011 – but don’t worry: we have even bigger plans for 2012.

“The beginning of our agenda for the year ahead is actually rooted here, in the history of this school. Gouverneur Morris High was created out of the School Reform Law of 1896 – 116 years ago. When the reform law was being debated, there were protests, rallies, controversy. Sound familiar?

“Well, we are here today because the work of school reform – as difficult as it can be – is still far from done. And it is now more important than ever.

“Nine years ago this month, on Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday, I gave a speech outlining our plans to transform a badly broken school system. Back then, the graduation rate had been stuck at 50 percent or less for decades. Violent crime, social promotion, hiring based on political connections – they all plagued our schools. Parents had too few choices about where to send their children to school, and they had even less information about how a school was performing. And the worst part was many people had stopped believing that anything in our schools could get better.

“Well, I know you didn’t believe that. And we didn’t believe that either. Together, we took on the broken system, and by stressing accountability and innovation and ending social promotion, we’ve made real progress turning it around.

“Today, graduation rates are up 40 percent since 2005, versus just 8 percent in the rest of the state – the whole rest of New York State. And the biggest gains have been made by black and Hispanic students, whose graduation rates are up more than 50 percent. We’ve cut the dropout rate – and school crime – nearly in half.

“And we’ve given our parents far more information about their kids’ schools – and far more top-quality school choices. In fact, a recent study by the non-partisan Brookings Institution found that we now have the most effective school choice program of any large district in the country. That’s right – the most effective in the United States of America.

“By almost any measure, students are doing better and our school system is heading in the right direction. Of course, we still have a long way to go. No doubt about that. But today, tens of thousands of students who may have ended up on street corners or in prison if the old system had remained in place – are now in college or starting their careers.

“Just think about where we are today. Ten years ago, the graduation rate here at Morris High was only 27 percent. Now, two-thirds of students graduate in four years, and three-fourths graduate within six years.

“And I have to say, those students who persevere beyond four years – often while dealing with family obligations or language barriers – really deserve to be celebrated because their determination and drive, their hunger for a better life, makes their accomplishment even more impressive. We have some students with us today who are on track to graduate, and I’d like to ask them – and their teachers and administrators – to stand up.

“The success our students have achieved demonstrates the promise of education reform. But the unemployment in the neighborhood surrounding this school demonstrates the urgency of fulfilling that promise now for all students, in all schools throughout our city. Unemployment is higher in the Bronx than in any other borough. People here want to work, but jobs are hard to come by. And in too many cases where jobs do exist, they require skills and diplomas that put them out of reach for many people.

“For my generation, a high school diploma was often enough to get a good job and enter the middle class. Today, graduating from high school without the grades to go to college, or the skills to enter a trade, generally means, at best, a low-wage job with limited prospects.

“Or, for far too many, it means beginning a life of unemployment and crime. We just cannot allow that to happen. If you come from a middle class family, as I do, and if you believe that education is the ticket to the middle class, as I do, then there is no escaping the fact that we cannot accept failing schools. And we cannot accept excuses for inaction or delay.

“All across the city, we face that same challenge – the challenge of building a 21st century economy and building the 21st century public schools that can drive it. It is the challenge of our time, and how well we meet it will define the state of our city for generations to come. So today, I’d like to share with you the new strategies we will adopt in 2012 to meet that challenge, and they all center on making our schools, our economy and our government the most innovative in the world.

“Let’s start with our schools. The education reforms we’ve pioneered over the past decade – no matter what the naysayers say – have been widely adopted by school systems across the nation, but this year we’ll be putting our foot on the gas and picking up the pace.

“Because we have to be honest with ourselves: we have only climbed halfway up the mountain, and halfway isn’t good enough. We want all of our children to see the view from the top, to see the world of possibilities that stretch out before them.

“Now, getting there won’t be easy. The climb gets steeper the higher you go. But we cannot allow fear of what lies ahead to stop us, we cannot allow obstacles to slow us down, and we cannot allow those who prefer the comforts of the base camp to the exhilaration of the summit to hold us back. We have to charge ahead. Our children deserve to make it to the top of the mountain. And we owe it to them to help guide them there. Today, with Chancellor Dennis Walcott leading the way, we are setting off for the summit, a summit that no other big city in America has ever reached. But if any city can, it’s New York City.

“The course we are charting involves five main steps – and let me briefly outline each.

“Step number one: since the single most important factor in a student’s progress is the effectiveness of the classroom teacher we are going to find new ways to attract, reward and retain great teachers.

“We already have thousands of great teachers – some of the best in the world. And I have enormous respect for the extraordinary personal investments they make in their students. Over the past ten years, we’ve worked hard to invest in them – by expanding professional development and raising their base salaries by 43 percent. A teacher hired in 2002 at a starting salary of \$31,000 can now make \$78,000, similar to what their peers in the suburbs make.

“This year, we’ll do more to attract great new teachers by helping them with their college loans. The burden of paying back college loans can sometimes lead top-level students to cross

teaching off their list of possible careers. But we need their talents in our classrooms. Our kids need them.

“And so we are proposing to create an incentive to anyone who finishes college in the top tier of the class: come teach in our schools, and if you commit to stay, we’ll pay off up to \$25,000 of your student loans. Our teachers deserve that, and so do our children.

“The marketplace keeps showing us that we have to be competitive if we’re going to attract the best and as everyone knows college loans have become a major issue for our young people. We expect the UFT will support the Department of Education in this effort. But if not, there are other ways to achieve it through the private sector. One way or another, we will attract those talented teachers.

“We’ll also work to retain the best teachers – by offering them a big raise. Today, we’re making an offer to all New York City teachers: If you are rated highly effective for two consecutive years we will hike your salary by \$20,000 per year.

“Historically, teachers unions around the country have opposed rewarding great teaching through merit pay, but more and more teachers are asking why, and we’ve seen how well this can work in other cities. A recent article in the *New York Times* explained how cities with merit pay have found that rewarding great teachers keeps them from leaving the system. Again, our teachers deserve that. And so do our children.

“With an evaluation system now required by law, rewarding great teaching is an idea whose time has come. We hope the UFT will join us in this effort, because it’s the right thing to do for our schools and our teachers. Their excellence deserves to be rewarded and compensated.

“Now, how do we determine which teachers are highly effective?

“Well, that brings us to step number two in our journey to the mountaintop. And here again, we’re building on the work we’ve already done. Two years ago, we directed principals to adopt a more rigorous tenure evaluation system. It used to be that 97 percent of teachers got tenure as a matter of course. Many of them deserved it. But others did not. Tenure should be something that is earned – not automatically granted.

“And now, that is exactly what’s happening. Principals decide who should and should not get tenure with the school superintendent signing off.

“Last June, the percentage of teachers receiving tenure dropped from almost everyone receiving it – 97 percent, to about half who received it – 57 percent. That doesn’t mean the rest won’t earn it someday – we hope most will. We have a big investment in them. But we are raising the bar for teachers, just as we are for students.

“This year, we’ll do more to make sure every classroom has an effective teacher – and to remove those who don’t make the grade.

“Unfortunately, for all the changes we’ve made in our schools, evaluating teachers is one area where nothing has changed. Teachers continue to be rated simply as ‘satisfactory’ or ‘unsatisfactory.’ It’s a pass/fail system – with a 98 percent passing rate. Our students don’t have the luxury of being graded pass/fail. Neither do people in other professions, who have to make a living to feed their families. And neither should our teachers.

“The debate over teacher evaluations began when the Obama Administration rightly made them part of the Race to the Top grant competition. To qualify for the money, the State passed a law requiring districts to adopt teacher evaluation systems, but gave the unions veto authority. As Governor Cuomo recently said, the law hasn’t worked. Like many other districts around the state, we are at an impasse.

“And let’s be clear about what the stakes are: A recent study by Harvard and Columbia economists found that students with effective teachers are less likely to become pregnant, more likely to go to college and more likely to get higher-paying jobs. Nick Kristof has a column about it in today’s *Times* and I encourage everyone to read it. Great teachers make an enormous difference and ineffective teachers are hurting our students’ futures – we can’t allow that.

“We need to be able to identify those ineffective teachers and give them the support they need to grow. And if that doesn’t work, we need to be able move them out.

“A real evaluation system that is based on measurable improvement in student performance and principal assessment and allows us to make real changes is the only way we can do that.

“We have a model that works well in deciding tenure – and this should be exactly the same process. But when we tried to get approval for such a system for just 33 struggling schools – 33 out of 1,700 – the UFT insisted on provisions that would make it even harder to remove ineffective teachers. Not easier, but harder. As a result, those 33 schools lost \$58 million in School Improvement Grants from the State. And if nothing changes, it could cost students in every borough hundreds of millions of dollars in federal Race to the Top funds.

“Well, I can tell you this: We’re not going to accept that. We’re not going to wait around while ineffective teachers remain in those schools.

“Under a school turnaround program already authorized by Federal and State law and consistent with a provision of the existing union contract, the City can form school-based committees to evaluate teachers on merit and replace up to 50 percent of the faculty.

“Under this process, the best teachers stay; the least effective go. And now, that is exactly what will happen.

“We plan to move forward with this approach for the 33 schools that should’ve gotten state grants. We believe that when we take this action, we will have fulfilled the State’s requirements and the schools will be eligible for the \$58 million in funding.

“But this is about much more than the money. The students in those 33 schools deserve effective teachers. And so does every student in every school. Our 1.1 million school children can’t afford to wait. There is too much at stake.

“They are counting on us – and we will not let them down.

“Now, step number three in our journey involves continuing to give parents even more top-quality school choices.

“The four new schools here at the Morris campus are among the 500 new schools we’ve created over the past decade, including 139 new charter schools. This year, we’ll phase out another 25 schools and open smaller schools in the same buildings.

“All told, our goal is to open 100 new schools over the next two years – including 50 new charters. And we’ll do that by asking our most successful charter school operators to expedite their expansion plans, including the KIPP Academy and Success Academy networks.

“We’ll also begin recruiting high-performing charter school operators who have yet to come to New York. And I’m glad to announce today that one of the most successful, Rocketship, has just committed to opening schools here.

“Step number four in our journey will prepare students for what awaits them at the top: college and careers.

“Today, far too many of our graduates are leaving without the skills they need to succeed beyond high school. Not every student wants to go to college, nor is college right for everyone. But all students should leave prepared to succeed in the next phase of their lives.

“Over the past year, we’ve worked with the State to re-align the Regents exams with college readiness standards, and that will happen in the years ahead. But our students cannot wait.

“In the weeks ahead, we will make every public school student complete new study lessons and assignments in both Math and Literacy that involve the kind of critical thinking skills that are aligned to college readiness standard and we will share the results of their work with parents at parent-teacher conferences this March.

“We’ll also begin doing intensive college and career readiness work with 40 additional high schools as part of our Young Men’s Initiative. And the Department of Education will continue forming partnerships that expose our students to exciting career pathways.

“For instance, last September, we opened an innovative new school in partnership with IBM that focuses on computer science. It’s a six-year high school – grades 9 through 14, that’s right: 14 – so students graduate with a Regents degree and an associate’s degree and they also get a place in line for a job at IBM.

“It’s a new way of thinking about secondary school based on today’s economic realities.

“And now, thanks to support from CUNY, we plan to open three more schools using this same model including one right here in the Bronx. In addition, with support from venture capitalist Fred Wilson, this September we’ll open a Software Engineering Academy, the brainchild of one of our own teachers – Mike Zamansky from Stuyvesant High School. We’re honored to have both Fred and Mike with us today.

“The new school will be located in Union Square – home to a growing tech community that includes companies like Yelp and General Assembly. Those are the kinds of companies we want our students to work for, or to start.

“And to encourage the next generation of entrepreneurs in every field, we’ve launched a pilot program for 2,200 students who are developing business plans with other students around the world.

“Over the next two years, we’ll open at least a dozen new Career and Technical Education schools and programs aligned with trends in the global economy. Students will get out-of-school internships tailored around their coursework and interests. Now to do this, we need more private sector partners.

“In recent weeks, many of our city’s leading corporate citizens have joined a new mentoring program for high school students called i-Mentor. It’s part of our innovative new effort with *NYC Service* to reduce school truancy.

“And now, I am issuing a second challenge to them – and to the leaders of our hospitals, hotels, nonprofits and small businesses of every kind, including our growing tech community: join us in this new effort to connect high school students to career paths. One of the companies that has already agreed to participate, I’m proud to say, is Bloomberg LP.

“I can tell you from personal experience how much an internship means. When I was in high school, I was lucky enough to get a job working at an electronics company. That job is the only reason I applied to Johns Hopkins University – and without it, I’m not sure where I’d be today.

“The fifth and final step of our journey to the educational mountaintop is making sure that when our children are ready to continue their education or training, they can afford to do it. This year, under a new partnership with the Obama Administration, we’ll be informed about which of our students hoping to attend college failed to apply for Federal financial aid – and we’ll help make sure they get their applications in.

“We’ll also help lead the charge for the New York State Dream Act, so children who were brought here illegally can apply for State-sponsored college loans, grants, and scholarships. We can’t blame them for being brought here as infants or teens. And since they are here to stay, it’s in New York City’s best interest to make sure they are able to become productive members of society.

“I took out loans to get through college, so I know how important that money is. And I believe that all of our students should be eligible for the financial aid they need to succeed. The five steps I just outlined aren’t about politics. They’re about children.

“When we sit down with the UFT, there are two groups in the room: the UFT and our school children – they are who we work for and we will. We have an obligation to stand up for their lives, their futures, their hopes and dreams. Their voice is the voice we listen to and I thought all of us should hear it today.

“Those are the leaders of tomorrow: the doctors, the lawyers, the mayors. They will lead the economy of tomorrow, if we give them the tools to do it and if we begin building that economy right here and now.

“That’s the second major challenge I’d like to address: making our economy a global capital of innovation for the 21st century. Last month, we took a big step toward re-defining our economic future by forming a historic partnership with Cornell University and The Technion - Israel Institute of Technology to build a new science and engineering campus on Roosevelt Island.

“Building the new campus will generate up to 20,000 construction jobs and 8,000 permanent jobs, not just for PhDs, but for building staff and office workers. Cornell and Technion will also create educational programs for 10,000 New York City students and 200 teachers annually – a partnership that will begin this fall.

“It’s going to be a transformative project – and today, we’re glad to be joined by the Dean of Computing and Information Science at Cornell, Daniel Huttenlocher and the Director General of the Technion, Dr. Avital Stein. As we work to create the jobs of tomorrow, we’ll also plan for and create the space that the companies of tomorrow will need to grow.

“In Lower Manhattan, we’ll work with Pat Foye and David Samson at the Port Authority to keep progress going on the new towers at the World Trade Center. On the far West Side, we’ll work with Related to continue bringing new jobs and housing. And we’ll complete the Signature Theater’s new home on 42nd Street.

“In the area around Grand Central, we’ll work with the City Council on a package of regulatory changes and incentives that will attract new investment, new companies and new jobs. To expand space for film and digital media companies, we’ll open a new incubator that will help us build on last year’s record success in film and television and continue to compete with Hollywood for post-production business.

“And we’ll launch a new non-profit called ‘Space Works’ that will create long-term affordable rehearsal and studio space for artists citywide, including on Governors Island.

“As we plan for future growth, we’ll also create the jobs New Yorkers need today.

“Here in the Bronx, the first wave of 2,000 construction workers will break ground on New York’s next great shopping destination: Eastchester’s \$270 million ‘Mall at Bay Plaza.’ In Port

Morris, Smith Electric Vehicles will open its first East Coast plant and more than 100 New Yorkers will go to work assembling zero-emission trucks and vans.

“A new supermarket, stores, offices and a new charter school will bring 200 new jobs to a long-vacant spot at the Bronx Hub on 149th Street. We’ll begin renovation work on the Bronx River Art Center, creating a new media center, photography studio and gallery.

“We’ll begin re-zoning East Fordham Road to allow for more private sector investment and explore economic development possibilities on Webster Avenue. To do that, we’re working with a group of neighbors we call the Bronx Quad: the New York Botanical Garden, the Bronx Zoo, Montefiore Medical Center and of course, the emerging basketball powerhouse, Fordham University.

“We’re also stepping up efforts to keep some 3,600 good-paying jobs where they belong – at the Hunts Point produce market. New Jersey is making a big pitch to lure the market away, but we’re fully committed to modernizing the market and keeping those jobs here.

“So today, in partnership with Council Speaker Christine Quinn, we’re adding another \$25 million to what will now be the City’s \$87 million commitment to re-building the market. And that’s not the only big news here in the Bronx.

“We’re also launching a new effort to bring jobs to the most talked-about empty building in the Bronx: The Kingsbridge Armory.

“In collaboration with Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., today, we are releasing a Request for Proposals for a new operator of the Armory. We’re putting aside our differences to do what’s best for the city. That’s what leadership is about. It’s not about a series of running arguments – it’s about getting things done.

“We’ve heard from a variety of interested parties, including those who want to develop it into recreational space. And we’re hopeful that the Kingsbridge Armory, vacant for some 15 years, will soon be transformed into a place that benefits the community and employs community members.

“In every borough in 2012, we’ll bring new jobs on line and make investments that will attract more visitors.

“In Queens, Jet Blue will open its new headquarters in Long Island City and an expansion of the Queens Museum of Art will double its size. On Staten Island, we’ll create a new blue-collar-friendly industrial business zone, we’ll redesign the zoo’s aquarium, and we’ll help break ground on a major apartment and retail development at the Homeport, creating more than 1,100 construction jobs.

“In Brooklyn, more good blue-collar jobs will come to the waterfront both in Sunset Park and at the Navy Yard. We’ll bring new jobs to Coney Island, with new rides and attractions. And

we'll open the new Barclays Center at Atlantic Yards – bringing big league sports back to the borough where they belong.

“These new attractions will also help bring even more tourists to our city – and last year we hit a record 50 million, but we can do even better.

“There are countless foreign tourists who seek to come to our city only to find it painfully difficult to secure a visa. That pain is not only hurting them – it is hurting us by costing us jobs. At a time when so many people are out of work, that's just unacceptable.

“This year, we'll work with Senators Schumer and Gillibrand to make it easier to get tourist visas, especially for those coming from growing markets like India, China and Brazil. Millions of people from around the world want to come here and spend money in our hotels, restaurants, stores and attractions. We shouldn't stand in their way.

“Now, as we create these new jobs, we'll also do more to help New Yorkers fill them. Last year, the City's Workforce One Career Centers made a record 35,000 job placements. This year, we'll help even more New Yorkers find work with four new Workforce One Centers, in all three public library systems.

“We'll help more immigrants who are skilled professionals obtain the licenses and certifications they need to find work here in the city. We'll create a new incubator that will offer foreign entrepreneurs the tools and legal support they need to develop their businesses here. And we'll increase opportunity for the City's minority- and women-owned businesses, so that those firms compete for and win more City contracts.

“Most important of all, we're going to mount a major new effort to help the New Yorkers who've defended our nation's freedoms find the jobs and housing they deserve.

“Today, there are some 9,000 unemployed veterans in our city. There's no excuse for that. And that's why this year, with the help of the Robin Hood Foundation, our Workforce One Centers will offer new services to connect veterans to jobs.

“We'll also work with a property manager called Urban American to attract more private landlords to the rental discount programs they run for returning veterans. Our men and women in uniform have stood up for our country. Now it's our duty to stand up for them.

“The cost of housing is something many New Yorkers struggle with. Since the national recession hit in 2007, the cost of living in New York City – like nearly everywhere else – has gone up. And not just housing, but food, transit and all the key parts of a family's budget. But there's one thing that in all fairness hasn't gone up: the ability of those at the bottom of the economic ladder to pay for those essential needs.

“In America, we want people to work – to set the alarm clock and punch the time clock. That's why we incentivize work through programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit. You work, we help.

“The minimum wage is another way to help those who can only find jobs with entry-level wages by incentivize and reward work. Like the EITC, it helps those who are trying to help themselves. But setting the minimum wage is also a balancing act – setting it high enough so people can get by on it without having a negative economic impact.

“Right now, I believe, we are slightly out of balance. The genius of the free market is not always perfect. Two of our neighbors – Connecticut and Massachusetts – have raised their minimum wage above the Federal standard to address higher costs of living.

“And so while we would prefer the Federal government to act to keep us competitive, this year, we will join Speaker Shelly Silver in pushing for a responsible raise in the minimum wage.

“Our city just cannot afford to wait for Washington. Not when it comes to illegal guns, not when it comes to climate change, not when it comes to creating jobs and not when it comes to raising the minimum wage.

“Now, some economic studies have shown that raising the minimum wage can reduce youth employment. And so we’ll work to counter-act that by continuing to increase our Summer Youth Employment opportunities. And to really drive at the heart of the unemployment problem, we’ll go to the neighborhoods where the problem is worst, like here in the South Bronx, and in Central Brooklyn.

“We’ll launch a new effort to mobilize businesses, community groups, non-profits and City agencies to create new job opportunities in these communities. For instance, in partnership with the Young Men’s Initiative, we’ll develop opportunities for New Yorkers to ‘earn while they learn’ the skills required by the knowledge economy. We’ll also create incubators specifically to help low-income entrepreneurs get off the ground.

“If we can succeed in raising employment in the most distressed neighborhoods – and I believe we can – then we can not only improve people’s lives, we can not only improve the safety and stability of those neighborhoods, we can build on the work of the Center for Economic Opportunity in helping the next generation of residents break the cycle of poverty that has plagued those communities for too long.

“If ever there was a community that knows how powerful targeted city investments can be, it’s where we are today, the South Bronx.

“This area was once so burned out and abandoned that it was compared to Dresden after World War II. Today, the South Bronx is a poster child for urban revitalization, and one of the people who really deserves enormous credit for that is with us today: Mayor Ed Koch. Thank you, Ed.

“Mayor Koch showed that investment in affordable housing is a key element of a successful economic development agenda. Over the past decade, we’ve created or preserved 30,000 units of affordable housing here in the South Bronx alone and more than 150,000 units across the city.

“This year, we’ll take steps to bring more affordable housing to the Lower East Side around Delancey Street to a site that has sat largely vacant for a half-century. We’ll begin building new affordable housing and retail space on Livonia Avenue in East New York, at Hunter’s Point South in Queens, at Randolph Houses in Central Harlem and across the entire NYCHA system, we will significantly reduce the backlog of repairs that has resulted from sustained Federal budget cuts. This is a key part of our strategic plan to improve services to NYCHA’s residents and preserve public housing for generations to come.

“A NYCHA community will also be the site of one of our newest waterfront reclamation projects. Using land that now lies mostly vacant, we’ll begin working to create 2,300 units of housing, a waterfront park and a supermarket next door to the Astoria Houses on the East River.

“All across the city, we’ll continue reclaiming and revitalizing our waterfront. We’ll open Rockaway Park in Queens. We’ll complete the reconstruction of McCarren Pool in Williamsburg, and the first phase of Calvert Vaux Park in Bensonhurst and we’ll transform Pier 5 of Brooklyn Bridge Park into soccer fields and open space.

“Here in the South Bronx, we’ll begin construction of Soundview Park. And out in the harbor, we’ll continue transforming the island that time passed by, with 30 new acres of parkland that will make Governors Island one of the great waterfront destinations in the world.

“And across the city, we’ll join with AT&T to bring Wi-Fi service to a dozen city parks – so even if you’re enjoying a beautiful day, you can still work or study or play ‘Words with Friends.’

“Reclaiming the waterfront and wiring our parks are just two of the ways we’re re-orienting our city around the needs of people today, not the needs of people 30 years ago. And that brings us to the third and final major challenge I’d like to address: making our government the most innovative of any in the world.

“By creating an administration that empowers team members, takes risks and leads from the front, we’re already setting the standard in so many areas.

“When people around the world talk about the most innovative public policies, where the most cutting-edge policies and programs are taking shape, they talk about New York City. And in the year ahead, we’ll give them plenty more to talk about.

“To begin, we’ll continue using technology to keep our city safe. The NYPD’s counter-terrorism program will add more than 1,000 advanced cameras to sensitive areas deploy more License Plate Readers to bridges and tunnels and expand the use of radiation detectors that are wired to the Lower Manhattan Security Coordination Center, which can respond immediately to any questionable readings.

“Our first responders will begin sending real-time information over the city’s wireless network from an ambulance to an emergency room, saving precious seconds and likely saving lives.

“We’ll strongly support the Governor’s push to expand DNA collection, which will build on the 2006 law we helped pass. And we’ll launch a data analytics team that will use the latest technology to fight crime and poverty and to assist businesses and entrepreneurs.

“To get more people working on construction sites, we’ll streamline the inspection process, just as we’ve done for restaurants and retail shops, in partnership with Speaker Quinn. We’ve already opened an online hub for reviewing and approving digital construction plans. Now, we’re teaming up with the industry to form the Partnership to Build NYC, and together, we’ll strengthen safety and reduce waiting times for building inspections citywide.

“Our goal is ten days or less – and we’re not talking about cutting corners, we’re talking about cutting red tape. And we’ll also do that by streamlining City Planning’s review of land use applications. City government will get smarter so more New Yorkers can get to work.

“We’ll also make our city smarter and safer by deploying Traffic Enforcement Agents to safety hot spots at key intersections, doubling the number of 20 mile-per-hour zones for schools, and continuing adding more miles of protected bike lanes.

“Now, I realize the debate over bike lanes has sometimes been hot and heavy. But the reality is more and more New Yorkers are biking, and the more bike lanes we put in, the fewer deaths and serious injuries we have on our streets.

“This year, we’ll take steps to enforce the law requiring every delivery rider to have proper safety equipment and clothing that identifies the name of the business. At the same time, we’ll launch the largest bike share program of any city in the country. Those bikes will create another option for getting around town faster and easier, and so will new Select Bus Service in Brooklyn, which we’ll launch in partnership with MTA Chairman Joe Lhota.

“And, of course, another options will be the new Five Borough Taxi Cab that New Yorkers have been waiting decades for.

“Finally, if we’re going to be the most innovative city in the world, we also have to be the greenest, because that’s how you attract the most forward-looking individuals and companies. So today, we’re announcing the next phase in three key areas of our PlaNYC environmental and infrastructure agenda: recycling, clean energy and clean air.

“To begin, we’ll double the amount of residential waste we divert from landfills by 2017. By taking steps like increasing recycling in schools and streets and expanding our plastics recycling program, we’ll reduce our waste disposal costs by \$50 million annually and help protect the environment.

“We’ll also become one of the first cities in the country to turn wastewater into renewable energy and we’ll explore the possibility of cleanly converting trash into renewable energy. To attack air pollution, we’ll overhaul the city’s air quality codes, green our building and zoning codes and accelerate our work with property owners to phase-out dirty heating oils. All of this work will help move us closer to our goal of having the cleanest air of any large city in America.

“Now, as ambitious as our agenda is for the year ahead, we’ll achieve it by continuing to do more with less. When I first took office, city government had 312,000 employees. Today we have 292,000 – a six percent cut. Yet in nearly every category, we are getting far better results than we did ten years ago.

“This year we will continue to keep head count down – but we will not sacrifice public safety or public integrity. We don’t tolerate misconduct or corruption anywhere, and we have the very highest standards for those we entrust to enforce the law. Our police force is the best in the world. And Commissioner Kelly has done an outstanding job making sure that New York’s Finest are also the most upstanding.

“To ensure that we maintain and strengthen that track record, we will increase the attorney staffing for the Commission to Combat Police Corruption, led by its chair Michael Armstrong, former counsel to the Knapp Commission.

“We’ll find ways to finance all of the initiatives I’ve outlined today, some of which come with very little cost, by continuing to make government more efficient and continuing to consolidate city operations.

“For instance, this year we’ll put three city-owned office buildings in Lower Manhattan up for sale. We expect will bring more than \$100 million next year for our capital budget, \$100 million in private sector tax revenue and cost savings over the next 20 years by converting public buildings to private buildings and it will bring new jobs and housing for the downtown community.

“We’ll also seek budget savings by doing everything we can to support Governor Cuomo in his push for mandate relief, including what has long been one of our top priorities: pension reform.

“New York City’s workforce is the finest in the world, and current city workers have earned their pensions. But we cannot afford to continue offering the same benefits to future workers. Right now, more than 12 percent of our budget is dedicated to pensions. That’s more than \$8 billion that we’re not using to reduce our tax burden or to spend on salaries for teachers, police officers and firefighter, or on job creation or social services. Governor Cuomo is right to make pension reform a top priority and he’ll have our full support.

“It won’t be easy. None of this will be easy. But everything that I’ve talked about today we can complete or make meaningful progress on this year. We’ll work collaboratively with our partners in City government and in Albany to achieve great things – and pioneer new innovations. And that’s the way it should be.

“Because this is a city where the line between the possible and impossible is routinely erased, and where the arc of human fate is bent by ambition, ingenuity, and hard work. That has always been true here, but it has never been truer than it is today.

“The sense of possibility that leads us to pursue big dreams and high ideals, that is the essential spirit of our city and we see it every day.

