

**EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY**



**Mayor Ras J. Baraka, State of the City Speech**

**October 7, 2020**

*Remarks as prepared for delivery*

Before I begin my remarks, I would like to observe a moment of silence for the Newark residents we've lost to Covid19 this year. Tonight, the theatre is decorated in the City's colors to pay homage to their memory. Please join me in a moment of silence.

Madame President Crump, the entire Municipal Council, Councilman Amador, Councilman Gonzalez, Councilman McCallum, Councilwoman McIver, Councilman Osborne, Councilman James, Councilman Quintana and Councilman Ramos.

All of my directors of every department who work to execute all that we imagine and envision, to every single employee that works for the people of our great city from the Fire department to DPW, from Vital Statistics to crossing guards, from Planning and Zoning office, to Code Enforcers. We thank you for the often thankless and difficult work you do every day to make our lives better. To all of the elected and appointed officials here and from around the state. We thank you for your partnership and your presence, particularly our Essex Legislative Delegation. And we thank more than all-the incredible and resilient residents of this great city. We are Newark. Newark stronger Newark leading and as Ken Gibson would say Newark getting there first. Finally, it took this country to get to its darkest moment for the stars to shine the brightest. We, Newark, are one of those stars. And it's the light from the work that we have engaged in over the years that has made us stand out. It is our light now that shines brightest in the middle of this world pandemic. Our light shines still in the face of deep systemic racism as the world watched as the knee of white supremacy choked the life out of George Floyd.

Our light shown bright as cities burned and the deep pains of inequity burst into chaos in American living rooms. Our light shown bright as we found ways to stay afloat to hold on to one another as we watched our institutions come together our neighbors deliver food to each other, make and distribute masks, support our frontline workers, rescue our elders and most vulnerable. Newark stood strong and I might add is getting stronger even in the face of incredible odds and because of that Newark is leading.

On March 14th, Newark recorded its first case of Covid19. The first two months of this virus we were hit hard physically, emotionally, psychologically. We never would have imagined the toll this virus would take on our lives and community. A community of predominantly Black, Brown, and immigrant residents. Over 70 percent renting and no real room to quarantine or social distance. A community without robust access to primary care physicians and that suffer disproportionately from the preexisting illnesses that exacerbated the outcome of Covid19. A community of proud essential workers and laborers. All of these things made April 2020 one of the most challenging years we ever recorded in this city. We were averaging 200 to 300 positive cases a day with a 68% positivity rate. Our death toll began reaching scary proportions. We were in New Jersey, the second hardest hit state in the country and in Newark that rapidly moved to the top in the number of cases per day and deaths in the state. Our children and families began struggling for food and wondering how to pay rent as jobs began closing.

The emotional toll began to wear down on us all as we stayed away from each other and sheltered in place. Our children lost contact with others and schools became virtual. Fear and confusion led on social media and economically businesses were hurting some still are and have suffered irrecoverable damage. The city's budget was not exempt as tax revenue slowed or stopped in some cases altogether. Some of our employees began getting sick and six of our police officers died. We had to act and act swiftly consistently without trepidation and with clear data. The Department of Public Safety along with the Department of Health and Community Wellness began helping us map and track the virus throughout our community. The Department of Health began investigating cases. We organized and trained city employees, Newark Public Schools employees, and students with the help of Rutgers Newark and prepared at least 200 contact tracers. We began setting up testing and now have at least 13 permanent testing sites in the city. We were the first city possibly in the country to initiate walk up testing sites as half of

our residents do not own a car. We started pop up testing sites in neighborhoods that were difficult to test or where cases seemed to be rising. We began testing all of our homeless population and seniors with the help and partnership of the Newark Housing Authority. We began purchasing PPE for our employees and later for city residents to distribute. We organized a mask up campaign to limit the spread of the virus and in the very beginning, we limited public gatherings, instituted a curfew closed businesses at 8 p.m. and then only allowed essential businesses to open up. We signed an executive order for everyone to shelter in place and my favorite we developed “Be Still Mondays” to relieve pressure off of our essential workers. Not only that, we put a moratorium on eviction and rent increases. We extended time for payment of taxes, water bills, and removed penalties and fees. We put money together for rent relief for residents and gave grants to local businesses, even home based businesses. We raised money for arts organizations and non-profits. And represented residents who were being forced out in the middle of this pandemic. We stood up two hotels for safe quarantine space and used one of them house over 300 homeless individuals. With the help of NPS we delivered over two million meals and provided virtual space for parents that had to go to work while their children engaged in remote learning. We reorganized the city’s leaders to meet the challenges of Covid19 and met virtually twice a day almost every day for seven months and still going. Our Interfaith Alliance held virtual prayer sessions every night and fasted every Tuesday and are still going strong. And in the middle of this we managed to still replace 15,000 lead service lines. And while other cities and private industry began cutting workers’ jobs, we managed to save city workers’ jobs from furloughs and layoffs, and orchestrated a bond deal that saved the city an additional 14 million. This is Newark stronger, Newark leading.

Look at the chart, it is clear that we have come a long way from despair and fear. We have not only dramatically reduced the positivity rate of Covid19 in our city we have managed to flatten it altogether. In fact, the reproductivity rate in Newark is less than one percent, which is an indicator of how well you have controlled the spread. This is the Gold standard. This is Newark stronger Newark leading. But I want us to be clear this virus is pernicious and stubborn. We are not in the clear yet. We have to maintain our fight be vigilant and consistent, look out for our neighbors, and our children. Wear your mask. Wash your hands continuously. Practice social distancing, get tested, and work to preserve our city and not put it in harm’s way.

Why is Newark stronger? Why is Newark leading? Let's start with this. After years of fighting in the streets and courts we stood up a Civilian Complaint Review Board with subpoena power and despite the court's ruling and with the help of Assemblywoman McKnight and every legislator that believes in freedom we will have what we fought for! We created the city's first paper cooperative managed and owned by Newark Residents. We managed to create an office to give people free legal services, created laws around affordable housing, developed a commission to deal with equity. We raised city workers pay to at least \$15 an hour, and took over once privatized services, developed stronger relationships between community and police. We figured out how to arrest less people and still watch crime drop, we declared Newark a safe and welcoming city to immigrants no matter their nationality or language. We passed local laws against criminalizing them. We pushed back against the madness of this president, and yeah we took our school system back from the state. We helped to create and advance small Black and Brown businesses to get them bonding capacity, help them win contracts and do business with the city. We hired hundreds of formerly incarcerated residents. We helped to push for voting rights for those on probation and parole that can now vote this November. We stood with our undocumented community to fight for them to get drivers licenses and created municipal IDs. We developed strategies to increase employment for residents at anchor institutions got them to spend more of their money with local businesses. We stood up a task force to PILOT Universal Basic Income to push for state and national policy. We reduced unemployment, made the city safer than it's been in decades, and at the same time dealt with a \$93 million deficit.

This was probably the most difficult time I had as mayor. I watched Newarkers perish from this new coronavirus and the world explode calling for change, reconciliations and repair, but even before that in Newark we were faced with a serious and grave problem. Lead was leeching from homeowners pipes into the drinking water. And I watched people twist my words, challenge my integrity. I watched pundits attack people that I know work hard for this city to keep our water safe and drinkable. I endured a multimillion dollar campaign to discredit me, this city and many thought even hoped that this was the end that we could never fix this. It was major- as internally I had to think about what we could have done better, make changes, and at the same time work with lightning speed to find answers- a cure. I didn't have the luxury of finger pointing or academic diatribes, I had to get us to a solution even quicker than we had anticipated. And I believe by the grace of God we have indeed done that. It is safe to say that our corrosion control

is working! As we have been saying for years now and only a year after we received \$120 million with the help of Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo. We are in the last leg of the race to replace every lead service line in this city. While many cities here in New Jersey and around the country are trying to figure this out, Newark is leading the way. If all goes well by the spring of next year we will be able to report to you that we are done! In fact, the group that we have been in a constant battle with in and out of court had this to say recently on NJ.com. More importantly since January the city has tested over 2,000 children for lead and have exceeded HUD's lead abatement program in homes so much so that we received an additional \$5.6 million to continue our progress in that area. This is really the most prevalent way that our children come in contact with lead in their homes and lead based paint and dust. And as you can see we have been abating more and more homes each year. And we have the largest abatement program in the state.

Not all storms come to destroy you, some come to pave the way. Not all difficulties are meant to crush you some come to force you to be stronger to force you to lead.

In fact, we have been able train and put more than 60 Newark residents to work replacing these lines. We awarded 14 contracts totaling almost \$130 million of which an estimated \$37 million dedicated to minority and women based businesses. At the end of August close to \$15 million have already been awarded to these businesses and almost \$4 million to MWBEs that are from Newark as well.

We have invested over \$200 million in water infrastructure since 2014, not including the \$120 million we are now investing in replacing every lead service line in the city. Since I took office we have increased the annual investment in the water department 382%.

While around the country we witnessed justifiable anger and outrage over systemic racism that soon spiraled into chaos and violence of indelible scenes of police cruisers running into crowds of protesters, rubber bullets and tear canisters used against unarmed protesters even in the nation's capital to make room for a photo-op. We witnessed armed militia gun down residents. Police precincts burning and military personnel snatch people off the street. These were dark and dangerous scenes that most Americans watched in horror and disbelief but I am proud of my city, of the residents here, the organizers, and the clergy alliance, the activist who knew that the headline would've read Newark burns again instead of thousands march for justice for George

Floyd and an end to systemic racism. I am also incredibly proud of our police. They demonstrated deep restraint and a desire to continue to mend the relationships with the community, not exacerbate them. This is not happenstance. This came with ongoing and steady work under the Department of Public Safety where our Director Anthony Ambrose and recently retired chief of police Darnell Henry has done a phenomenal job to reduce crime and fight to reform a system whose history was littered with very basic and consistent violations of our rights. They came in to a difficult, even impossible situation with a force considerably downsized through layoffs, and almost 200 officers out on some form of leave. And an intractable crime problem that went up and down.

They immediately bought into the idea of police reform, and expedited efforts to comply and even go beyond the consent decree. They began making officers accountable not just for arrests but for interacting with the community. As a result, our interaction with the community and touches with residents are up but our complaints are down and so is crime. I believe that our efforts to partner with not just every police agency and intelligence unit in the state helped us sustain our numbers but our unfettered and growing relationship with community based organizations, alternative police strategies, and building community empathy and trust. Newark Community Street Team, Newark Street Academy, Newark Anti Violence Coalition, Equal Justice USA, West Ward Victims Outreach and all the organizations affiliated with Brick City Peace Collective from the HUB to Beth Israel Hospital. Our collective work down this path has resulted in incredible outcomes, the South Ward, for example last year experienced the largest drop in violent crime in decades. The numbers are clear. In a four year period from 2015 to 2019 we witness a 31 percent decrease in overall crime. We entered office with 112 homicides and ended 2019 with 51. The lowest murder rate since 1961.

And during the pandemic this year, we, along with most major cities in the country experienced a spike in crime and violence but Newark managed to endure it and push back. Just look at our January to September numbers from previous years and the same time last year. This is still way too high and the work we are doing must increase and be more directed. We have to find more resources to fund alternative strategies to policing or community-based efforts. We have begun strategizing with Department of Public Works and the Police Division to begin to identify the areas where we can improve city service around illegal dumping garbage collection and abandon

properties that will help make neighborhoods safer. Police officers are beginning to take quality of life complaints and are even assisting the Department Engineering in counting street lights that are out to report as it adds to overall safety of our community. We are uniting our efforts around BCPC and received a commitment from the state for an additional \$1 million to develop and expand community strategies around victim services, conflict resolution, mediation, and violence prevention. But what is more important is that while in most of our major cities people are debating the issue of defunding the police, in Newark we actually have a plan.

This is something that we have been doing before this became popular. We have already used police funding to hire social workers. We have already used police funding and personnel to address homelessness and drug addiction through our Hope One van, not arrests. We already use police resources to help fund alternative strategies to help reduce violence but it was not enough. This moment called for us to quicken our pace and expand our strategy. As a result we created the Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery based on the idea that I walked in to office with in 2014—Violence is a public health issue. We are centering all of our alt strategies under one roof. We are expanding our programs beyond parts of the south and West Ward. We are lifting up the idea of trauma recovery and are intervening and interrupting trauma, conflict and reducing victims and perpetrators alike. Which most often are one in the same. If we create less violence the need to over police our neighborhoods disappears and as result we continue to fund the programs and systems that promote complete wellness and health for our communities, for our families. The police become a part of an overall community based strategy to reduce violence and crime and not the answer itself.

But what is more compelling is our work around our efforts with the community. In 2010, we had 857 citizen complaints now we are at 271. Excessive force complaints dropped from 88 to 16. The cost of our lawsuits dropped from over \$1.3 million in 2010 to \$51,000 in 2019. And since June 2019 the Newark Police Division had more than 2000 business checks, 2,000 citizen contacts that did not involve a police action, 200 youth engagements that did not involve a police action, and attended more than 200 community meetings. We have community police roundtables and trauma circles. We had new policies and training before the mass protests on use of force, de-escalation, implicit bias, and LGBTQ sensitivity. And we recently added the Ashley amendment which instructs our officers to contact advocates of the LGTBQ community when

they have issues identifying and or dealing properly with LGBTQ victims. Unfortunately, this does not mean we will never have issues in our city or times when things go desperately wrong. What it does mean is that we deal with it and we will work with our community to make sure justice is even handed, and that it is not blind but that sees the inequities in our society and addresses them until we live in a place where the language someone speaks or the color of their skin or the God they pray to or the person they choose to love, does not condemn them to inhumanity.

As a result of the city's improved financial condition Moody's revised the city's bond rating two times. Once from negative to positive and again from BAA1 to BAA2. I hear people trying to downplay this, but this is a huge deal. In 2010, we were in financial distress. In 2012, we had a state monitor. Today we control our own finances. In 2014, our financial issues grew to well over \$100 million. It means we have changed the trajectory. Our work helped us to buy city buildings back that we sold to county and leased back in prior years. It allowed us to bond to get new equipment and do much needed capital improvement. It made it easier for us to partner with the county to get \$120 million to replace our lead service lines. This was all made possible because of the great work that is happening in our Tax Division in the Department of Finance.

We are collecting more property taxes from residents and businesses alike. The growing development and the growing businesses that choose Newark means more revenue. But more importantly our special tax collection for payroll, parking, hotels has increased from \$54 million in 2014 to \$92 million in 2019. We collected \$37.5 million more dollars, Why? Because timely billing, efficiency, enforcement, and collaboration with State of New Jersey on the sharing of information. And the great work Juanita Jordan is doing under the direction of Danielle Smith our Finance Director. And this work along with the Darlene Tate and the Office of Budget carried us through these uncertain financial times. In fact, Newark did not have to furlough staff and Moody's maintained the city's positive outlook. The city refinanced its \$100 million obligation bonds and managed to save \$14 million over a two-year period that will help us recover faster and keep delivering service to our residents.

We have changed the narrative about our city. We are attracting businesses and development to our great city—even during the pandemic. We are still building and still developing. The groundbreaking finally of the old Krueger Scott mansion in to a live workspace is incredible and



proof that we are still scoring touchdowns. When I entered office in 2014 with no balanced budget and financial gap that seemed insurmountable my first priority was to stop the city from bleeding money, our tax base from eroding, to plug our deficit, hire more police, drive murder down, buy equipment, collect garbage, pay people more wages, or at least have a contract. Invest in our infrastructure and turn this place around.

We worked hard in the Department of Economic and Housing Development, in the Department of Finance, in the Budget Office and in the Business Administrator's office and all over the city to cut waste, become efficient, raise revenues, and start this engine again. And not only did we do that, we have begun to push our equity agenda that is beginning to take hold from co-ops to affordable housing. In the Office of Tenant Legal Services, within a short period of time, 572 people have received some form of legal services and 207 received actual legal representation. Even during this crisis, we have still represented residents keeping people from being thrown out on the streets in the worst time this generation has seen. And to go further, in 2014 we handled some 3,500 request for service and in 2019, 9,256. And take a look at the number of properties by year that we have in fact registered since 2016 when we began this process. And since 2018 our registration has increased some 516% from 519 to 3,138. This accounts for over 5,000 units or families. That means we have stabilized more families rent, allowed many to stay in their homes, and given many more a fighting chance to use more of their income on other necessities besides rent. And because of tax abatements in 2019, we have created over 1,000 units 770 are Affordable units. 10 buildings rehabbed, three buildings for adaptive reuse. This created 1,133 construction jobs and up to 2,000 permanent jobs. And an affordable housing trust fund that has \$796,770 added to it and over \$22,000 in our school trust fund dollars.

In fact, on March 5, 2020, I got to stand with Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, the Region 2 Administrator of HUD, Councilmembers Osborne and McIver on the grounds of Garden Spires. We remember this place because so much that went on there. Even elected officials camping out there because the conditions were so deplorable. We were able to take this slumlord to court, as we do so many others across this city and with the help of the Murphy administration our state legislative delegation led by Senator Rice on this project and the private sector, we were able to get some \$200 million dollars of investment in to this development to rehab 600 hundred units and keep them affordable at the same time. A few weeks before that I stood with the Lt.

Governor once again the NJ Economic Development Authority, New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, and St. Barnabas (Beth Israel) as they were awarded funding to build 70 units of affordable housing on Bergen Street at 20, 40 and 60% of the AMI.

This is the first of its kind in the city, where we are tying health and wellness to housing. In fact, since 2015 we started putting more affordable units on line. Altogether we built some 3,514 affordable units and this is outside of our inclusionary zoning ordinance. Of all the units built in the Central Ward, 50 percent of those units are affordable. There are 481 units under construction in the South Ward right now and over 90 percent of those units will be affordable. And recently, we just announced an additional 5.2 million dollars to further the work of building affordable units in every ward. There will be 13 developments that comprise of 302 affordable housing units with HOME funds. They range from new two and three-family homes, to the renovation of vacant apartment buildings and new construction of apartment buildings, to the conversion of a manufacturing plant into a seven-story loft residential building.

Nine of the 13 developments are being built by minority and women developers. Presently we have approximately \$5.7 billion of construction in the pipeline. This number is consistently increasing even in the middle of the worst pandemic since 1918. In fact, at the city auction we sold city property to the tune of \$7 million dollars. In terms of industrial space, right now we have about 1,853,362 sq. ft. under construction—and are estimating 2,532,557 coming in the next couple of years. At Invest Newark, which was formerly known as NCEDC, with the help of the city, they began repurposing and rebranding to introduce a land bank strategy and some new timely initiatives that reflect our collective movement. Besides the capital fund for Newark based contractors and sub-contractors, they also created a Newark Paper Co-Op that has already opened for business, made up of Newark residents that will cooperatively own and operate this enterprise. We have marched a long way from 2014. We are stable, moving forward, getting stronger and leading the way.

We have come a long way, but we have an even longer way to go to get us to the place of equity where we need to be. We need more affordable units. We need to protect the units we have and work diligently to make sure that those units are fit enough for us to put our own families in. It's not enough to advocate we keep housing, we must keep housing that's decent. We have to work hard to uplift and develop entire sectors of our community that have not been invested in in

decades, that are rotting with decay and deep and unchallenged poverty. Places we ignore- places many of us claim to fight for but have never visited. Where CRA has purposefully missed. Where the majority of our abandoned properties, lots, illegal dumping, and crime exist.

In fact there is correlation between areas that are left underdeveloped and crime. If we intend to go to the next level in this city, this is where we must spend our time, our resources, our energy. It affects our tax distribution, our social service costs, homelessness, drug addiction, homicide and aggravated assault rates. It's the reality our children grapple with as they try to make sense out of their growing appetite for success, if school is operating correctly, and the reality of the despair they are being fed on their way to and from school. This is why we need a land bank. This is why we need a land trust. We have to repair and rebuild these neighborhoods and we have to invest in them by any means necessary. We have to create opportunities for Section 8 homeownership, side lot development, affordable rental and home ownership opportunities. We have to create residential coops and commercial ones, too; community development strategies that focus on families and their health disparities. We have to put retail back in the corridors; families back in those homes and hope back in our children's hearts. There are some that don't understand why this must be done that are concentrating on the present costs and not the cost that has burdened us for decades, nor the cost it has on us now or the growing cost that will multiply if we do nothing. This is why I am ecstatic that the Municipal Council voted for the agreement to begin moving forward on the state's first Land Bank that happens to be in the city of Newark.

Finally our success also is a result of our collective efforts with our corporate and Anchor institutions. Thanks to the diligent and consistent work of our partners in the private sector, the nonprofit community, and higher ed community and the Institute for Social Justice one of the first to call out the 2020 number. We setup a goal to hire 2,020 Newark Residents by the year 2020. I am happy to report that we went well past our 2020 goals. We actually hit our target one year early and 2,279 Newark residents were hired at some of our major Anchor institutions. We learned that we could've actually done a lot more and we intend on doing more. The great thing about this is that it has begun to affect the culture of the way things are done. People are now actively looking for and recruiting Newark residents for their schools, for employment, and to do business with.

NJIT and University Hospital have increased its local hiring by 35% and 9% respectively just from 2018 to 2019. Rutgers and its Biomedical Health Sciences Center pledged to hire 220 Newark residents over three years and now doubled that and have hired 437 in both full and part time positions in only two years. And the average salary of new hires at Rutgers is at \$56, 382 dollars. In fact the following corporations have met and exceeded their goals. NJIT, Rutgers, RWJ Barnabus, United Airlines, and PSEG. If you are in the corporate community and your name was not called, even if you are a midsize to major employer in this city and you do business in this city, this is what we are doing! You cannot call yourself a Newark based business if you are not a part of Newark 2020. As wealth becomes more concentrated in the hands of a few in this country it is up to us who believe in democracy both political and economic that you find a way to help us create equity in this country and you can start right here in the city of Newark.

I want to thank all the corporations and anchor institutions that collaborated with us. The impact you are delivering in this city will be felt generationally. We applaud you. I also want to call out a few institutions for really moving on the buy part of our strategy—Rutgers University spent about \$12 million dollars in Newark in 2019. PSEG exceeded its 2019 internal goal and spent more than \$150 million dollars with Newark based businesses. And Audible got really creative and established the Lunch Out Wednesday program that includes over 20 local restaurants. They give their employees a stipend to eat at the local businesses. This novel idea has contributed about \$500,000 in additional revenue to local businesses and helps us sustain our business community and develop the necessary walking traffic we need to begin to build the downtown we want to see. I also want to thank Newark Alliance and its membership for corporate support during the height of the Covid19 epidemic. They raised over \$5 million dollars to help with Covid relief for PPE, relief for small businesses, and marketing. One of the most impactful programs was and is the Newark Working Kitchens. This lead by Audible, PSEG, Panasonic, Fidelco, NJ Devils and others, activated many of our local restaurants helps them maintain revenue while providing good healthy meals to residents that need them. 500,000 meals have been delivered since the start of this program.

And I am happy to announce two initiatives being moved forward under the direction Fayemi Shakur, our director of arts and culture. The first one is the Art Space and Social Impact

Capacity Building Initiative. This initiative provides for three to five city owned properties leased per year to qualified local applicants- arts organizations, artist collectives, nonprofits, and community development organizations. They will be allowed to lease this property from the city for one dollar for two years. They will be able to provide programming there and after two years get their lease renewed through the Municipal Council, and on the fifth year purchase the property at cost- based on their first year. The second initiative is called Percent for Arts funds. This will provide \$500,000 to \$1 million a year to make available to support small and midsize arts organizations and collectives. This money will be made available through tax abatement contributions, developers, foundations and corporate partners. The Creative Catalyst fund helped many artists continue to get through Covid and these initiatives will continue beyond Covid and help our city—and others began to recognize the power of Art to social progress and economic sustainability for our city.

I'm excited about the things we were able to accomplish for our young people. We've renovated recreation centers and parks all over the city. We've distributed more than 10,000 books this summer through the Mayor's Book Club. Next week at libraries across the city, we will have copies of the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* to commemorate the 95 anniversary of his birth. I am also pleased to announce that Newark was one of 13 cities selected nationally to partner with the National League of Cities to address the basic needs of local and secondary students. Newark's participation will support a focus on digital access.

And lastly because of our Health Department and homeless commission, more than 205,000 bed nights have been provided to the city's unsheltered population since 2018. 79 previously unsheltered individuals were placed into permanent housing with the help of the Newark Housing Authority and 3,000 families avoided homelessness through our emergency solutions grant. And during Covid the Health Department under the leadership of Dr. Wade stood up a hotel lease that accommodated over 300 homeless residents and supplied them social services as well as three meals a day. Which brings me to this- one of the largest projects we are working on now at this moment, because of the combined efforts of our state legislators led by Senator Ruiz on this project, is the additional amount of money we will raise on the city's long term parking tax. This will result in us raising the funds to build a walking bridge akin to the Highline Bridge in NYC that will begin at Mulberry Commons Park and run above McCarter Highway, attach

itself to Newark Penn Station, and land in the Ironbound. You will be able to leave Penn station and walk toward the center of the city or towards the city's East Ward. It will connect two parts of our city and spur millions of dollars of development around it. The most exciting part of it is that with this funding we will also build a brand new 150 bed homeless shelter, create 100 units of transitional housing for families to help steer them off the road of pervasive homelessness—and 100 units using the housing first model for the chronically homeless.

I am truly excited about the work we have done and more importantly the work we are getting ready to do. Despite our difficult times, Newark is on a long march forward. We are getting stronger every year. Not simply because of the work we are doing in our administration but because of your engagement, your input, you pushing us, your collective leadership in your block meetings, your community. Because you are a part of the Newark People's Assembly, because you attend police community roundtables, because you do what is necessary to keep our city moving and because of that Newark is leading the way. Not just here in New Jersey but around the country. I am looking forward to what is to come. The expansion of our Newark 2020 program to create more jobs and greater procurement. The opening of Terminal A at the Newark airport that through our collective efforts will feature local black and brown businesses at the airport. Our guaranteed income pilot along with about a dozen other mayors across the country and the Jain Family Institute, NYU, Columbia, Jack Dorsey to raise \$5 million to begin our PILOT in 2021. I am excited about launching our bike and scooter share program and figuring out planning and infrastructure support for biking in our city. Not just downtown but for access across the city. DPW will launch its trash can initiative across the city promoting healthier and cleaner neighborhoods by providing uniform, durable, and wheeled trash cans to Newark residents and along the corridors. I am extremely hopeful about the work the newly formed Land Bank will be doing, and the opportunities it will offer to Newark residents. Many of you participated in the city's auction of the first time and were deterred by the speculators and the high cost. The land bank is designed with you in mind. They have exciting opportunities like the Section 8 homeownership program converting renters into owners. The foreclosure fee fund is New Jersey legislation that allows us to require banks to register foreclosed homes and allows us to levy a fee on it. We are recommending that the fee be used to provide relief to residents, renters and homeowners. Based on our current calculations we can collect between \$750,000 to \$1 million in the first year of this program. And as a result of the creation of the Office of

Violence Prevention, we are closing the current location of the first precinct which was the 4<sup>th</sup> in 1967 when the city went up in flames for four days and 26 families lost their loved ones. The precinct will become the headquarters of all of our alternative police strategies and a museum chronicling the history of activism in our city curated by City Historian Junius Williams. We are also going to commission a statue of Harriet Tubman in Washington Park where the old Christopher Columbus statue stood and rename the park Tubman Square. This is just not window dressing. Newark played an integral role in the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman's journey to freedom led her to our city many times in that very area in a state that was one of the last to acknowledge freedom.

Lastly, we are intent and deliberate about making All Black and Brown Lives matter. We know that all life includes our lives. This is why we have launched our social justice fund Forty Acres and Mule. Why? Because the wealth gap in this country is outrageous but in New Jersey the wealth gap is worse than the country. White families' median net worth is \$352,000. Black families' net worth is \$6,100 and for Latinx families it is \$7,300. This exists because of structural inequity and pervasive and intractable racism that has plagued this country since its founding. It is a result of stubborn and purposeful of very real problems endemic in our systems and the lack of will to address them.

Generations of families have grown up in poverty, poor health, inadequate resources for education, poor quality and lack of housing and decades of being intently locked out of economic growth at the expense of the National GDP and the upward mobility of the country as a whole. We in Newark will lead the way to attempt to not just shine light on this but mitigate it until reparations come!

And to all of our corporate partners, financial institutions, people that love and benefit from Newark. We need your help, your investment your money. NO more studies, no more policy papers, no more administrative support, no more meetings and retreats and NO more excuses. This county, this state, our city has a problem built on white supremacy and intentional inequality. You can't profess to love this city, love us, and watch us in despair. Watch our Abuelas and Abuelos struggle. Now in this moment in history is the time we need it most. Don't let this second dissipate and you have not done your part. History will always judge us. It is what we do at this time that will speak for us for generations to come.

For years we have allowed other people to define us, to be self-appointed narrators of our lives. Like the writers of the old westerns who always concluded the story with the Indigenous people losing. I am happy today that we are telling our own story, we are writing our own history, and in this version we win.

We have always, our city our people, been underestimated, written off, and undervalued even to a point where we undervalue ourselves where we expect to be last. But let me remind you. David wasn't given the finest sword, a long spear, or shield made of Bronze he was given a rock and a sling shot. Noah wasn't given the power to breathe under water, or fly. He was told to build an arc. When Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego was put in the furnace the heat still came on. The temperatures still rose. Our character or leadership will never be measured on our ability to avoid difficulty, pain, and impossible moments. It is how we come out of it and what we do when we get to the other side that measures who we are. Our strength, our leadership shines brighter because of what we have been through and how we stand tall during and after, because trouble don't last always.

I don't know if you watched the last presidential debate—and I'm praying that tonight's vice-presidential debate is markedly different—but it has highlighted how dangerous a moment we are in history. How precarious and uncertain our future is. It tells me now more than ever that we must vote. We witnessed narcissism as it height, deliberate and calculated lies for the sake of crushing your opponent—not lifting us up. The debate was clouded with confusion and dismissiveness of a virus that has killed hundreds of thousands and destabilized our livelihood. A president who took credit for everything that was good and blamed all his failings on others. The leadership we saw or lack of is why we are stuck in this moment. Racists being told to stand back and standby as a wink to white supremacy.

I have to say Mr. Trump, I'm from Newark. Take a look at what's happening in New Jersey. We have a Democratic Governor, even better we have a Democratic Mayor that actually believes in democracy. We have fought this virus responsibly and because we did that we are opening up our economy cautiously but opening up indeed. We need our businesses, our jobs, our children to play sports, our parks, our libraries, our museums. We need services delivered and people cared for. But we also cherish our lives and more importantly the lives of our neighbors. We are going to continue to open up because we are going to continue to fight this virus responsibly. We saved



possibly hundreds of lives and distributed monies we barely had to working families. We stopped evictions and prevented layoffs. We fought the ugliness of white supremacy and managed to wake up without our city burning. Protesters sat in the middle of Broad and Market Streets in civil disobedience and Police Chiefs from across the county took a knee here in Newark in the persona of Colin Kaepernick showing their disgust for the murder of George Floyd and signaling that this must end. We know in Newark that white supremacy is wrong, that fascism is evil and we have no problem condemning it. The Klan is an illegal organization in Newark and so are their sympathizers.

Your narratives are proving false here. We have arrested less people and reduced crime at the same time. We embrace all of our residents documented and undocumented. We believe all Newark families contribute to the good of our community. We are growing jobs yet still fighting for a better, cleaner environment. We don't shrink in crisis, close our eyes during difficult times. We count on each other. We fall back on our neighbors. We use data and believe in science. And we protect the right for people to love who they want, to see themselves as beautiful, to worship their own faith, and speak multiple languages. We believe in democracy here. I'm not running for your job Mr. President but I will surely be voting the next person to be in that seat on Nov.3<sup>rd</sup>. And I'm mailing my ballot in! And making my mark because Medgar Evers died in his wife's arms, because Emmett Till's body still haunts the bottom of the Tallahatchie River, and because it is my right and my duty. It is my responsibility to not just those that came before but for millions that will come after me. And finally because Newark must remain strong and by the grace of God get stronger and we in this time, on this day, will continue to lead the way now, and many years after you are gone!

God bless this state and God bless the great city of Newark!