

## Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms' 2021 State of the City remarks, as delivered:

### 2021 State of the City Address

Thank you for joining us for the 2021 State of the City. While we are separated because of the pandemic, the hard work of our city continues.

Thank you to our essential workers for keeping our city going during these difficult times. This includes our sanitation workers, the men and women of our public safety departments, our watershed employees and so many others.

You are all shining examples of the resilience of **Atlanta and that is why the state of our city is strong!**

It is an understatement to say that this has been a challenging year. But in true Atlanta fashion, we have joined together to help one another. There is a great slogan: *Atlanta influences everything!*

From our legacy as the cradle of the civil rights movement, to our current status as one of the most progressive cities in the nation, even in the midst of one of the most difficult years in modern history we still shine as that city on a hill – influencing the world.

Thank you to my chief of staff, Carmen Chubb, our chief operating officer, Jon Keen, members of my **cabinet**, all of our **employees**, and **City Council** for continuing the important work of our city.

Our friends at the Coca-Cola Company have been sponsors of this event for years. A big thank you to James Quincey and the entire Coca Cola family for your support.

Thank you, also, to the **Atlanta Committee for Progress**. Your support and counsel are invaluable to our Administration.

We are excited to have a new partner for this virtual event. Welcome and thank you to **GrubHub**, for making sure that breakfast was delivered to everyone who wanted to participate.

And to my family, your unwavering love and support means the world to me. It is not easy to be Mommy, Mayor and Wife, and I could not do any of these things without the unconditional love and encouragement I get from my husband and best friend, Derek, our four children, my amazing mother, and my entire immediate and extended family.

Like many of you, I have experienced major losses over the past year, including my Godmother, Lena Webb a retired teacher from Thomasville Heights Elementary School who was present for *every* major event in my life, including driving my mother to the hospital when she went into labor with me. My mother-in-law, Celestine Bray Bottoms, also a retired Atlanta Public Schools teacher. She joined other teachers and students in integrating Northside High School, and also taught at Southwest, Mays and Southside High Schools. Her former student and my chief of staff, Carmen Chubb, describes her as Atlanta's teacher.

We also said goodbye to my kindergarten teacher from Collier Heights Elementary School, Ms. Peggy Hall, who was present for my two previous State of the City addresses. And, my dear Ryan Falconer, a Woodward Academy 2020 graduate, and Freshman at Howard University.

There are also numerous losses that we are mourning as a community, some due to senseless gun violence and others due to COVID-19, including the passing of several City of Atlanta employees, and of course, we are still dealing with the loss of some of our hometown heroes like Congressman John Lewis, Rev. C.T. Vivian, Rev. Dr. Joseph Lowery, Hank Aaron, and so many more.

And now for some good news. I am honored to announce the City's first Poet Laureate **Pearl Cleage**. This announcement underscores our City's commitment to the Arts and investment in our creative community. For those of you who may not know Pearl, she is a critically acclaimed best-selling author, play write, performance artist, political activist and poet who has called Atlanta home since 1969. She is currently the Playwright in Residence at the Alliance Theatre and the Just Us Theater Company. And she is even a veteran of City Hall, having worked as a press secretary and speechwriter for Mayor Maynard Jackson. We are thrilled to have her as the City's inaugural official poet, and to honor her contributions.

This summer, the nation witnessed cries for racial equality as thousands of people of all races took to the streets demanding **police reform**. Coupled with the pandemic, it was a moment that demanded acknowledgement and action. The tragic killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and others made us all take another look at how black and brown people are treated in America.

Even before the unrest, our Administration had begun the hard work of **looking inward at the policies and practices of the Atlanta Police Department**. Many of our officers were already following guidelines outlined by **President Obama's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing**. Those guidelines call for a change in culture in policing, and embraces working with communities to tackle the root cause of crime.

It is just human nature that officers who build relationships in the neighborhoods they patrol, have a more measured response when something goes wrong. That's why I look forward to the opening very soon of two new At Promise Youth Centers in our city.

These centers in SE and SW Atlanta will join in the great work that's already being done on behalf of our young people and families at the At Promise Center in Vine City.

So, while we focus on **building that trust**, we are also **supporting** our **officers** who show up every day committed to respecting our communities and keeping our City safe.

Supporting our officers and holding them accountable are not mutually exclusive. We can, and should, do both.

You may recall that one of the major actions we took in supporting our officers was passing the **largest pay increase** for police in the City's history.

We are also now working with City Council to enact a **retention bonus** to keep those officers from leaving the force.

The good news is that men and women still have a desire to work in the Atlanta Police Department, and We are committed to putting an additional **250 new officers** on the street during the next fiscal year. We currently have in training **3 new APD recruitment classes** with a total of **90 recruits** in the pipeline.

Building on what we have learned from our **Advisory Council** on the **Use-of-Force**, we partnered with policing experts to develop new training that includes **de-escalation tactics**. What that means is that officers are being trained on when and how to intervene to diffuse a situation when engaging members of our community.

We're also committed to working with our philanthropic and corporate partners to build a new **Public Safety training facility** for our police officers and fire department to ensure that they get **top-notch training** in a **well-equipped facility**.

Right now, our public safety personnel are training in spaces that are too small, too old and not up to tech-no-logical standards. A top-notch city should have a top-notch training facility.

It has been a tough year for our communities and for law enforcement, not just in Atlanta, but across America. But I am confident that at the end of this work, Atlanta will influence public safety policies across the country.

But this is not just about policy to me, it's about more than being a Mayor. It's about being a mother—raising children in this city.

I have said before that Atlanta is not alone in the rise in gun crimes we've seen over the last year. That is not an excuse, it is a fact. But just as we have overcome challenges in the past, Atlanta will get to the other side of this COVID crime wave, and we will get this violence under control.

As I prepared this year's address, I looked at the speech I was to give last year at the onset of the pandemic, where I was going to announce a 9-percent overall decrease in crime.

Then, COVID came our court system effectively shut down, people lost jobs, loved ones died and our crime began to spike. This year alone major cities across the country, including Atlanta, have seen a rise in murders and aggravated assaults. This includes the tragic and senseless mass killings targeted at Asian American owned spas in metro Atlanta.

I recently joined President Biden and Vice President Harris in a listening session with members of the AAPI community to discuss ways we can work together to end this targeted violence.

We will continue these types of sessions with other communities in our city as we work together to save lives and combat the gun violence that is plaguing our city.

Mayors and leaders across the country are recognizing gun violence as a public health emergency, and I join them in that sentiment. Too many innocent people are losing their lives to senseless gun violence. These are the kinds of crimes that APD is working to stop by partnering with the FBI, the GBI and with local partners to investigate, arrest and convict those responsible for the shootings that have occurred in our city.

Since the beginning of the year, APD has made **216 gun-related arrests**. They are using air units, including **helicopters** and **drone technology**, to spot street racing activities in progress ... and stop them in their tracks.

APD is relying on camera technology with our **Operation Shield Camera Network**. This network includes over **1,500 cameras** and license plate readers across the city that assist with solving crime quickly. Through a public and private partnership, we are committing \$3 million to expand our network by **250 cameras** over the next fiscal year.

This is hard work, and it won't be easy, but we are up to the task, and it will take all of us ... as a community, working together to make a difference.

President Biden says show me your budget and I'll show you your priorities. In Atlanta we are putting people first, using our resources and energy to make our city a safe place for us all.

It's why we will seek to use a portion of our American Rescue Plan funds to support a **\$5 million commitment** to expand Atlanta's **Cure Violence** initiative.

Many of the gun crimes we see are between people who know each other. That is why we need programs that stop people from picking up weapons to resolve conflicts. The Cure Violence program does this with a three-prong approach that includes: interrupting retaliatory violence, conflict resolution, and changing community norms toward a culture of non-violence. It is a national program that has seen success in other major cities, and we have seen its success as a pilot program in SE Atlanta's NPU-Vs.

We know that crime has not been the only way that COVID has disrupted our city. That's why when the pandemic hit last year, we took immediate action by standing up a **Pandemic Response Team** and calling together an advisory council consisting of some of our top business, community and health leaders. We shifted many of our City employees to teleworking and supported those on the front lines with **\$500 per month in hazard pay**. This included our public safety personnel *and* our sanitation workers and many others who worked nonstop to keep our city running during this pandemic.

The pandemic created economic disruptions for households throughout our city. That is why we took immediate steps to **stop evictions and water disconnections**, giving our families and businesses that were hit the hardest and suffering the most some relief.

We were one of the first to take many of these important steps and these efforts were replicated in cities across the country. Indeed Atlanta influences everything.

The lives of our children were disrupted in ways we could have never imagined over the last year. It was heartbreaking to learn that there were children in our city who for any number of reasons – were not using technology to learn. Some of them, *literally*, had been sent to playgrounds alone to stay all day when schools closed.

So, we created **learning pods** in our recreation centers to provide hands-on assistance to these children and to help ease the burden that parents and grandparents were experiencing in managing remote learning.

Following advice from health experts, we put guidelines in place for the city, including **requiring face-coverings in public and limiting the size of social gatherings**.

All told—through our **ATLStrong initiative** and our commitment to ensure federal relief funds made it directly into the hands of Atlantans—we infused **\$80 million** of emergency support into our communities.

We served **thousands of** people through **emergency food programs** and since March of last year, we have served more than **119-thousand meals**, including breakfast, lunch and dinner to students in the **Atlanta Public School system**.

More than **815 businesses** impacted by the pandemic received financial support and nearly **6-thousand families** received **emergency housing assistance**.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted fault lines in our society ... and been a stark reminder of the need to keep, as a priority, our work towards ending homelessness in our city.

Since the beginning of my term as mayor in 2018 more than **\$42 million** has been invested through **HomeFirst** towards ending homelessness in our city.

HomeFirst is a partnership between the City of Atlanta and the **United Way** that provides people in need with services in real time.

Last year, our Administration set aside **\$1.5 million** in emergency funding for homeless and displaced individuals, which was matched by an additional

**\$1.5 million in philanthropic contributions**. Through the non-profit **Partners for Home**, we set up a comprehensive system for people experiencing homelessness who can now access housing assistance and wrap-around services, and we opened hotel options for them to lodge safely during the pandemic.

Through these efforts, we have **moved nearly 500 people** from homelessness into permanent housing with ongoing wrap-around services.

With that, we have done in four months what typically takes a year to achieve, and We are on track to house 2,000 individuals and families by the end of this year.

While the City of Atlanta received **millions of dollars in federal funding**, through the **CARES Act**, we know that more is needed.

Last month, I joined a **bi-partisan group** of mayors and governors from across the country at the **White House** to share our most pressing needs with President Biden and his Administration. During that visit, I asked the President Biden for **more local access to vaccines** and I asked for better reporting about where vaccines are being distributed.

The concerns and needs of Atlanta were heard loud and clear. I was ecstatic when I received a call from Jeff Zients, the country's COVID czar for the Biden Administration, to let me know personally that help was on the way.

**Community Vaccine Sites** have been set up throughout our city, including at the **Mercedes-Benz stadium**. This site will deliver up to **42-thousand vaccines a week**. This site, located in the city's **west side**, will go a long way in making the vaccine convenient for the communities who have been most hard hit by COVID-19.

We are **going door-to-door** through our neighborhoods to ensure all those who qualify can access the vaccine. This **targeted effort** will focus on residents who need assistance with **registration information and transportation**.

With the passage and signing of the historic **American Rescue Plan**, even more **direct financial assistance** will flow into Atlanta and this will allow us to continue to support the needs of our communities ... and that includes helping residents and businesses get back on their feet.

Even for as much as our work has been focused on the pandemic, we have still kept our eye on the prize. For our Administration, that means continuing the work of creating One Atlanta.

We are dedicated to affordable housing and economic mobility as a cornerstone of that commitment.

When I pledged a **billion dollars** toward affordable housing, some thought it was too ambitious, but in the words of Nelson Mandela, *"It always seems impossible until it is done."*

It is not just about affordable housing it is about housing for our workforce, where every day, hard-working people like our teachers, firefighters, police officers, bus drivers and so many more can afford to live with dignity.

I am happy to share that we are well on our way to making good on our **\$1 billion dollar pledge**. Since I became mayor, nearly **\$500 million** of locally controlled public funds have gone towards creating and preserving affordable housing in our city.

In January, I signed legislation that will give the City access to an additional **\$100 million in new bond funding** to provide more affordable housing.

To date, we have more than **6-thousand** new and preserved affordable homes ... on our way to our **2026 goal** of building or renovating **20,000** affordable homes throughout Atlanta.

An example of this progress is **the first phase of Herndon Square**, a development that Atlanta Housing broke ground on last year. Many of you may know the area as the **former Herndon Homes**. The **multi-phase development** will include nearly **100 affordable units for seniors**, set to open in just a few weeks.

When we embarked upon the major redevelopment of the Gulch, we were able to create a citywide **anti-displacement tax fund** to help homeowners pay their increasing property taxes. This type of community benefit is not normally included in multi-billion-dollar development deals, that is, of course, until we did it in Atlanta.

With the amount of development happening around the city, this move is a game-changer for long-time residents wanting to stay in the communities they helped build. I made a commitment to keep Atlanta moving forward, leaving no one behind, and we are doing just that.

We know that *Atlanta influences everything*, and cities are looking to replicate this model in their changing urban landscapes.

As we work to provide housing security, we have also made strides to ensure the economic security of our residents.

Our Administration partnered with Invest Atlanta on the inaugural **One Atlanta: Economic Mobility, Recovery and Resiliency Plan**.

This plan addresses the creation and access to good paying jobs, support for small businesses, neighborhood investment and affordable housing.

As I think about where Atlanta is headed in the next 50 years...with a population that will more than triple we must continue the work that we have started; continuing to marry commerce with compassion.

Atlanta, our city on a hill, has become a national model for the kind of public-private partnerships that allow everyone the opportunity to achieve success.

In the midst of a tumultuous year, business attraction, retention and expansion continued. We made a positive impact on more than **13-thousand jobs** in the city, **creating new jobs** and helping many Atlantans stay employed during this tough economic time.

Last year, we welcomed **14 new companies** through Invest Atlanta's business attraction efforts, generating nearly **3-thousand new full-time jobs** and close to **\$150 million** in new capital investment.

Many of these companies are part of a growing innovation ecosystem in the heart of Atlanta. Recently, companies such as **Microsoft, Boston Consulting, Google** and **Airbnb** have announced expansion of their operations in Atlanta.

Our culture of collaboration has influenced the path nationwide, for how to build a city where each one, helps one.

For example, The **Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation** granted **\$17.5 million** to the **Atlanta BeltLine** to enhance connectivity at **Westside Park**. When our city faced a PPE shortage the **Home Depot** donated **15-thousand masks** to help keep our city employees protected. The Atlanta Hawks owner Tony Ressler, Atlanta Falcons players Donte' Fowler and Grady Jerrett donated more than \$200,000 toward our ATL COVID relief fund. And the Hawks have announced an additional \$100 thousand dollars plus towards our Women's Entrepreneurship Initiative.

Atlanta is still good for business a city where businesses can grow, thrive and lift our communities as they prosper. In the words of Mayor William Hartsfield, *“somehow Atlanta always meets the challenge. We have been doing it and we will continue in the years to come.”*

These words hold true today.

In partnership with our business community through the Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge we have reduced CO-2 emissions by over half a million metric tons.

That is why in what has been one of the most challenging years of recent generations, Atlanta is still standing tall the city too busy to hate, not too busy to love ... and not too big to care.

With the support of business owners and the philanthropic community, we have embarked upon a clear and designated funding path to complete the construction of the entire Atlanta BeltLine trail by 2029.

Having lived in Atlanta my entire life, and watching my grandmother take MARTA to work every day at Davidson's and Macy's at Lenox Square Mall, I know that **transportation** is not just about mobility, it is about connecting people and communities.

That is why our Administration created the City's first **Department of Transportation (ADOT)**. Creating ADOT streamlined City operations resulting in a 40-percent reduction in administrative costs and a 65-percent increase in performance. Shortly after we created the department, we announced the **One Atlanta Strategic Transportation Plan**, a blueprint for a safer, more equitable and sustainable transportation network.

We launched **Vision Zero** to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries on our roads. It's been said, if you can't measure it, you can't manage it. Solid data help us make sound decisions. That is why our Vision Zero initiative includes data-driven strategies like reducing the citywide speed limit to 25 miles per hour in neighborhoods, impacting nearly **75-percent** of the streets in Atlanta.

We have lowered the speed limits on *other* major corridors, such as Marietta Boulevard and Hosea Williams Drive.

Our team has also installed more than 8-miles of new and repaired sidewalks and filled nearly 28-thousand potholes since I was sworn into office.

Building on our One Atlanta vision, we continued the work to reimagine and repurpose our City Jail. The **Atlanta City Detention Center** was built more than 25 years ago when our approach to criminal justice was very different.

The people incarcerated in this massive empty building are not charged with violent crimes. The people jailed there have been charged with **petty offenses** like driving with a suspended license or with an expired tag.

This nearly 500-thousand-square-foot 17-story-building holds approximately 30 people a night not even on average 2 people per floor.

That's right, **Thirty people**.

**Thirty people in a 17-story building** in the heart of Downtown that is costing taxpayers millions of dollars a year to operate. The Atlanta Detention Center is on **Peachtree Street** just blocks from the Downtown Business Center, thriving neighborhoods, colleges and universities, and sports venues. By far, not an ideal place for a jail.

Reimagining a different use for this facility is a good financial move for the City, but it will also help us tackle issues like homelessness, addiction and mental health, ultimately making our City safer and our communities stronger.

By reimagining the detention center, we are choosing to put our finite resources toward creating wellness and opportunity, which is in line with our vision for One Atlanta.

I have personally met with our new District Attorney, Fulton County Sheriff and county and community leaders to discuss ways that we can work together to alleviate the challenges in our criminal justice system.

There is a way that we can work together, without once again creating a center of mass incarceration in the heart of downtown. There is an opportunity for us to partner in several areas including diversion and re-entry programs, rehabilitation and support services all of which are in line with our vision for creating One Atlanta.

There are also innovative opportunities for collaboration when it comes to engaging our young people. Our Administration has hired the City's first-ever **Senior Director of Youth Engagement**. She will work with **Atlanta Public Schools** to **harness** the **potential** and focus the **entrepreneurial energy** of many of our young people, including the young men who are selling water at intersections throughout the city also known as "water boys."

Let me be clear, no one should be physically or verbally assaulted while waiting at a red light, and we will address those incidents accordingly, but for many of these water boys it's about making much needed money to support themselves, and sometimes, their families. We will connect these young people with City resources to help them find jobs and get them back in school.

**Before the pandemic**, we were able to employ more than **650 young people** in summer jobs with the City of Atlanta. We've not been able to offer nearly that number of opportunities this year.

That is why we are calling on companies and businesses big and small to help us reach our goal of offering summer employment to **at least 1,000 young people across our city**. We will provide **virtual and in-person jobs through our Summer Youth Job Program**. This will include the **One Atlanta Virtual Summer Residency** an "earn to learn" program for young people between 14 and 18 years old. It will include a series of master classes, roundtable lecture series and leadership development.

The second component includes **Paid Internships and Employment**. This program is for **young adults ages 18-24**.

Over the next several weeks, we will share more information on how you can apply and how businesses can help with this initiative.

Atlanta has long been celebrated as a place where human and civil rights are valued. To ensure that Atlanta remains an open and equal city for everyone, we appointed our first-ever **Director of LGBTQ Affairs**. Atlanta is amongst just a hand full of other cities across the country to establish a full-time position in this area.

We will focus on cultural humility training for City of Atlanta staff, and we will launch constituent-facing professional development and mentoring programs for the LGBTQ community.

Just a few months ago we hosted a virtual **LGBTQ Opportunity Fair** which connected more than 800 people with employers looking to hire. Through a partnership with FUSE Corps, we welcomed an **HIV Executive Fellow**, earlier this year.

Her role will be to expand opportunities for HIV-preventative programs and policies for the city. These efforts have kept Atlanta at the top of the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index.

We have achieved a **perfect score plus** each year since our Administration took office and we intend to continue the trend.

As we turn the page in our fight against this deadly pandemic, I am looking forward to the year, with a focus from our Administration on:

- ♣ Reducing Crime
- ♣ Tackling Homelessness
- ♣ Affordable housing
- ♣ Youth Employment and Engagement, and
- ♣ Improving City services and infrastructure

The world has changed, but the vision of One Atlanta has not. With bold new investments, we will set the table for long-term success. And we are inviting all our residents to share in it.

These investments represent our best chance to address the income inequality and other issues that have left some of our communities behind, on the outside looking in.

One Atlanta is the city we aspire to be.

It is the place we are meant to be...A safe, affordable and resilient city with thriving neighborhoods and businesses...

I proudly carry in my heart my family's history, which we have traced to a plantation in Crawfordville, Georgia, to once enslaved people by the names of Betsy and Sheperd Peek.

It was the hope for a better future that brought their children to Atlanta nearly one hundred years ago.

You may have heard me speak of my grandfather who, as a small businessman, would travel from Vine City to what he called "Uptown," or downtown as we know it – where he and the men he employed from his neighborhood, would haul out the paper and the trash from hotels and businesses.

My grandparents didn't leave me a lot of material things, but what they left in me was more valuable a belief that I was worthy.

They taught me that I was capable of anything I set my mind to, as long as I worked hard, and it aligned with God's will.

I never imagined that my family's journey all their work and sacrifices – would lead to my being the 60th Mayor of Atlanta. But here I stand, leading a city that combines compassion with commerce, but also with conviction.

In the words of Ambassador Young, "*We rise in glory as we sink in pride.*"

Pride would have me say, "I have all the answers, I have it all figured out."

But the reality is that the challenges before us are bigger than one person or any one Mayor.

The solutions will require the work of us all.

In the same way William Hartsfield envisioned an airport out of a racetrack, in the same way Ivan Allen, Jr. worked with Civil Rights leaders to break down racial barriers, in the same way Maynard Jackson and Ambassador Young brought civic and corporate leaders together to bring the Olympics and the world to Atlanta we can ... we will ... we must continue to dream big.

But only *together* can those dreams become a reality.

Thank you, Atlanta, for trusting me to serve as your Mayor during such a time as this. It has been, and continues to be, my honor.

Let's stay safe ... get vaccinated ... and let's continue to Rise Up Atlanta.

Thank you.

And may God bless and keep each of you.

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