Welcome, members of the Bryant City Council, City Department Heads, employees, and residents of Bryant.
Governor Hutchinson said in his radio address last month, “Arkansas is open for business.”--- I am going to adjust that statement to a more personal level and state that tonight, Bryant- is “Open for Business.”

Our city has experienced more economic development recently than we have seen in years. We are experiencing economic strength because our city is financially strong, vibrant,.... As well as focused on enhancing our quality of life, education, being a *healthy* city, and keeping up the technology of the 21st century.

The talents of our residents, the energy of our businesses, the creativity of our arts, and the passion of our sports organizations have combined to create a unique moment in the history of our growing city.

We are in the midst of a moment rich with opportunity.

Last year, we showed how we can work together to make our local government function and improve the lives of the people of our city. This year, we will start to see the long range results of those positive decisions and actions.

In April, ***because of our action***, police and fire will have improved field data services which enables them to connect with you….when you need them.

Continuing in April...**because of our action**, we will begin increasing park maintenance and expanding park programming.
In May, **because of our action**, the Master Bike Ped Plan will be revealed. This will ensure Bryant has the greatest opportunity to secure future federal transportation funding as well as connecting our neighborhoods and parks.

In June, ***because of our action***, we will begin to see the last gateway to the city being constructed at the Raymar overpass, opening vast economic development opportunities in that area.

In September, **because of our action**, we will see the largest Fall Fest with a greater economic impact of any prior festival.

In October, **because of our action** , intersection improvements in the Heart of Bryant will begin.

We must remain committed to implementing these achievements.Following through and getting it right is just as important as getting it in the first place.
While Bryant is strong and getting stronger, we must recognize that the momentum of our thriving city is all of our responsibility to keep moving forward in a positive manner.

We also recognize the challenges that lie ahead..
…in how we experience growth – We are committed to continue being both thoughtful and deliberate in our planning.
…in prosperity – between those who have opportunities for a local career and those that must commute
…in our schools – between those who are coming to school ready to learn and are graduating on time, and those who are not…
…in public safety – between being one of the safest cities in the state, and managing the growth of our departments with the growth of our city…
And, of course, cutting across these challenges---- is the most challenging aspect of all – *and that is unity*. (AUDIENCE)

We must keep working together so that we can keep driving better outcomes on each of these vital issues.

Our city is many things, including a city of young people – if you include all of our school population, nearly half of Bryant residents are younger than 35.

This is why I have invited our high school students and leaders to attend tonight here or view online.

I welcome each of you and encourage you to stay engaged in the future of your city.

You are coming of age at a time of unprecedented growth and change in your city.
This can be exciting and energizing – and it can also be confusing and unsettling.
But it does present us right now with a once-in-a-lifetime chance to define the future of this city while each of you are beginning to define your own future.
So let us define both together.

[MOVING FORWARD *Growth and planning*]

Bryant continues to grow faster than any other comparable city in Arkansas.

Over the past 20 years, the city set goals for answering to the growth we experienced.
Some areas we thrived, in others we still have room for improvement.

In the next twenty years, Bryant is expected to continue to grow at the same rate. This means we are projected to add nearly 20k residents in the next twenty years.
And as we grow, our City must ensure that we maintain a livable and sustainable city.

For example, our population has increased by 55 percent over the past decade but investments in transportation have lagged far behind.

In order to maintain a low unemployment rate, we must plan for growth in jobs as we prepare for growth in population.

So this year, we will continue a forward thinking approach to these issues to meet the needs our rapidly growing city.

As we provide plans for new density neighborhoods, such as the Heart of Bryant, we will also provide plans for how the city will invest to ensure those neighborhoods continue to thrive.

To the students in this room, take a moment and think out twenty years from now. You will be in your mid-30s. You're likely to have a job. A spouse. Perhaps children. Where will you be living? Near trails and walking paths? Will it be a house with a yard? Will you be able to walk your children school, or to a park?

Those are the questions before us. And we want to hear your answers. Your vision for the next chapter in Bryant's story.
Growth must be about creating great place….. with thoughtfulness towards how we will maintain and sustain that growth over time and what kind of future our investments will create for generations to come.

[MOVING FORWARD with *Transportation*]
With a vibrant economy, our challenge is to continue creating more transportation choices for everyone, while making a healthy active lifestyle the easy choice.

In the five years since I took office, we have made a series of moves to give Bryant residents reasons to be confident about how their street grid will be built out in the future.

We created a Complete Street Ordinance that not only ensured quality streets that would last are being built, but also that these streets are people centric --- not just traffic centric.

We added miles of new bike lanes throughout the city and more are on the way.

Last year, we brought POP UP REYNOLDS to the Heart of Bryant to represent the vision you casted throughout the JumpStart planning process.

Last election cycle, the voters of Bryant saw to it a local government team was elected for **positive growth**.

Our city has many worthy individual plans for bikes, cars, and pedestrians.

But we have lacked a unified, modern, interconnected transportation plan. A philosophy for how to get our city moving.

Until now.

In 2016 I am putting a renewed emphasis on positive growth planning.

By the beginning of May, we will release a new comprehensive vision for how Bryant approaches transportation….

…a vision that integrates all transportation plans into a single strategy that is greater than the sum of its parts, which has been named, WALK BIKE DRIVE Bryant.

Walk Bike Drive Bryant is a vision for growing and expanding our transportation choices to meet the needs of all users, for today and tomorrow.

We will use Walk Bike Drive Bryant to guide our investments as we renew our transportation bonds this year.

We will get the basics right by connecting our grid in a manner that reduces school traffic.

Bryant, it bears mentioning, is not an island. To keep our city's economy moving, we must also keep our region moving. ***With new on and off ramps at Raymar*** in the coming year – ***Highway 5 and Alcoa Rd expansion*** coming soon, ***Boone Rd improvements*** coming this year– NOW is the time to build on this momentum.

These vital expansions and connections will link our growing community and keep Bryant moving forward.

Together, these efforts will have profound impact on our transportation future.
But there's no denying it: our transportation future would look very different without the leadership of THIS City Council.

[*Moving Forward in Education*]
Quality education and how it relates to our city's quality of life is real ...and it is a growing need.
Every year the Bryant graduating classes are bigger than the year before.
Every kindergartner in the Bryant school district should be kindergarten ready…
Every graduating senior should be ready to launch, and on a clear path to where they want to land….

I recently read a Princeton study that claims The Arts increase social capital and community cohesion. In my opinion, this was proven true by the Bryant Art Club and their involvement in the POP UP REYNOLDS project.

Some students from the Bryant Art Club are here tonight. I challenge you to not let anyone discredit you because you are young, … instead be bold, engaged and active, igniting the plans for all that is ahead for our great city. We may not have an art guild but we have an amazing ART department and we want you to feel welcome to express your talent beyond the borders of your campus and throughout the community.

The Bryant School District affects more than just the students who attend the classes there. It impacts our city's quality of life, economic growth as well as develops future business and community leaders. We can not afford to place the responsibility of building our school system on the school district alone. We must share that responsibility as partners, and do everything we can to give them the support and tools they need to continue our vision for our children.

[Moving Forward *Government Performance*]

A rapidly changing city requires a City government that can adapt right along with it. If Bryant residents are to have confidence that City Hall can meet today's challenges they must be able to measure the city's performance.

Your city departments are goal focused in every area of performance. Just to name a few, increasing departmental efficiency, resolving storm water issues and improving communication and data sharing. In the near future we will launch OpenGov to enhance this delivery of data so that it may be more interactive and include performance targets as well as contributing data detailing departmental goals.

I want to emphasize the strong leadership of all of our departments. These are the most committed dedicated group of people I could ever imagine working alongside. We are your team Bryant and we all love what we do to serve you.

[Moving Forward Public Safety]

Last year, we committed to using a data-driven approach to address Bryant's complex and ongoing challenges in maintaining of of the best public safety departments in the state.

Through the leadership of Chief Kizer, Captain Plouch, Chief Jordan, and Assistant Chief Futch, in January, the Bryant Police & Fire Department launched Spillman.

This new software will assist in

1. faster response times
2. improved mapping
3. ability for the departments to create and finish reports in the field.
4. it will also allow for tracking important statistics in order to better target crime.

These are early steps in addressing our public safety challenges, but they are very positive steps... in the right direction.

[***Moving Forward Economic Development***]

Bryant is home to one of the most robust educated work forces in the state.

We have a diverse economy, a great education system and a quality of life that is attractive to families and retirees. This keeps our unemployment low.

Medical care and other service industries continue to grow before our eyes.

Bryant is ripe for a corporate headquarters to locate here, we have a lot to offer.

But we as a City lack a more focused approach to economic development.

Too often, we have rested on our luck and our geography.

In the coming months, we will be asking our local business owners:

"What do we need to do to make the task of running *your* local business easier?"

"What can we as a City do to help businesses thrive?"

Over the last year, we have taken some initial steps… with the leadership and help of the EDC committee.

We held a economic training with Arkansas Economic Development Council, where we learned how to market ourselves for headquarter relocation.. and expand our health care industry... We are seeking key development anchors for our city.. and we continue to be acclaimed as the city that is business friendly and technologically savvy towards new businesses and development.

Now I would like to leave you with this story:

One day, a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a younger man in the distance picking something up and throwing it into the ocean. As he got closer, he called out, "Good morning! What are you doing?" The young man paused and said, "I'm throwing starfish in the ocean. The sun is up and the tide is going out, and if I don't throw them in, they'll die."

"But young man, don't you realize that there are miles and miles of beach with starfish all along it? You can't possibly make a difference."

The young man listened politely, then bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves.

"It made a difference for that one."

The older man didn't know how to reply, so he just turned and walked away. All afternoon, he tried to work and couldn't get the image out of his head. As he thought about it, he realized that what the young man was doing was choosing not to be an observer in the universe and watch it pass by, but choosing to be an actor in the universe — and make a difference.

When morning came, he got up, put on his clothes, went to the beach, found the young man, and with him, spent the rest of the morning throwing starfish in the ocean.

You see, what that young man's actions represent is something that is special in each and every one of us. There is significant work that must be completed in the upcoming months. You have elected strong leaders to ensure that the labor that lies ahead, is completed with both planning and foresight…. but you see...each of us have been gifted with the ability to make a difference.

I want to challenge everyone in this room tonight to find your niche, your place, to make a difference in your community. Be more than just informed, be engaged.
Let us work together to make a difference... in our city parks... in our neighborhoods... and in the growth and future of our city. I thank each of your for your support and I look forward to seeing the great achievements that we will accomplish together in 2016.