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PRESS RELEASE

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DeKalb CEO Michael L. Thurmond Delivers Final State of the County Address
700+ Attend Annual Address and Lunch at Assembly Studios on Thursday

DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA – On Thursday, May 2, 2024, the [Council for Quality Growth](#), in partnership with [DeKalb County Government](#) and the [DeKalb Chamber of Commerce](#), hosted the 2024 State of DeKalb County Address at the brand new Assembly Studios in Atlanta. DeKalb County CEO Michael L. Thurmond delivered his 8th and final State of the County address to more than 700 Council and Chamber members, elected officials, businesses, residents, county staff, and partners of the county. This year’s lunch and program was presented [Amazon](#), [Decide DeKalb Development Authority](#), and the [Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority](#).

CEO Thurmond’s address, titled “Assembling Success in DeKalb” and accompanied by classic cars, fit the setting for the new movie studios built on the grounds of a former General Motors Assembly Plant. He began his address by reflecting on “lessons learned” from his time leading DeKalb County. His tenure is marked by efforts to restore trust in local government. He helped to turn the school system around and oversaw great enhancements to the county’s water and sewer infrastructure. He was an integral part of the county’s resilience from the recent health pandemic, with initiatives around food insecurity, crime prevention, rental assistance, and creating jobs. When Thurmond was elected as CEO in 2017, it was an entirely different time for DeKalb County. “DeKalb has risen,” he said.

The CEO’s daughter, Mikaya Thurmond, introduced her father to the stage, emphasizing his leadership and accomplishments throughout his career. “He ushered in a ‘New Day of DeKalb’ built on trust, accountability, and integrity,” she said. She highlighted the more recent programs the CEO has initiated in his 2nd term as well as his lifetime accomplishments as an author, lawyer, politician, and father. Mikaya is an accomplished journalist and news anchor in Raleigh and her father’s namesake.

Thurmond is known for using the State of the County platform each year to lay out his vision for DeKalb County, and this year was no exception. As he is preparing to leave the CEO seat due to the 2-term limit, he left a deliberate charge for the future leadership of the county to rededicate themselves to what is left to achieve. “We’ve come far, but the journey is not over,” he said. “There are neighborhoods in DeKalb where poverty still stalks the homes of decent men and women. There are neighborhoods where gunfire is all too common. There are neighborhoods where hope, unborn, has died.”

He set forth a clear vision of inclusion for DeKalb County. Thurmond has witnessed the stark divide between North DeKalb and South DeKalb. “We have to be smart enough to not turn away from each other, but to turn toward each other,” he said. His vision for DeKalb County is one that is not separated by geography, race, religion, sexual orientation, or political affiliation. It’s a vision he shares for Georgia and for the entire country.

“If you really want to do something for Mike,” Thurmond said in the third person, “praise me if you must, celebrate me if you can, but build bridges, open up the lines of communication, and promise me that we will never go back to the foolishness and the craziness that we were. Promise me.”

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The event was held at the new Assembly Studios that opened in late 2023. Gray Television's 135-acre development is the site of the former General Motors Assembly Plant that closed in 2008. Thurmond invited the United Auto Workers Local 10, a General Motors Worker's Union, to attend the State of the County address and acknowledged them for their contributions. "You better thank a union worker," he said. "They didn't just build cars; they built the American middle class."



This was CEO Thurmond's final State of DeKalb County address, with record attendance and a sold-out crowd assembled in the sound stage. While he hasn't announced what's next for the former superintendent, state legislator, and labor commissioner, he teased "I may need your vote." Thurmond is also a historian, lecturer, and published author. Three former DeKalb Commissioners are vying for the CEO seat, and according to Thurmond, all are "extremely talented and prepared to take the mantle."

Before he began his address, CEO Thurmond also presented three W.W. King Bridge Builder Awards to local business leaders and public servants for their great contributions to DeKalb County. This year's recipients of the highest honor bestowed by DeKalb County were the Honorable Elizabeth Wilson, Former Mayor of the City of Decatur, Cynthia Jones Parks, President & CEO of Jones Worley Communications, and Monica Maldonado, President & CEO of IPCOMM Agency.

The Council for Quality Growth's State of DeKalb County annually convenes the county's business community with its local government bodies, as well as with other local leaders from across the region. "DeKalb County continues to be a thriving place for businesses and residents alike," said Michael Paris, President & CEO of the Council for Quality Growth. "We're excited to showcase the newest economic engine here in DeKalb for CEO Thurmond's outgoing address. The Council commends the leadership of Michael Thurmond during his tenure as CEO and looks forward to celebrating his successes alongside the promising future in DeKalb."

Michael Paris and Frankie Atwater, President & CEO of the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, served as the Masters of Ceremony for the program. The audience also heard from Robert Patrick, Deputy Presiding Officer of

DeKalb County Commission, Mayor Pro Tem Gerald Evans, City of Doraville, Hilton Howell, CEO of Gray Television, and Danny Johnson, Manager of the ARC's Metro North Georgia Water Planning District. The Council's Chair, Sally Riker, and DeKalb Chamber's Chairman, Jeff Taylor, delivered remarks and introduced sponsors. Presenting sponsors Dorian DeBarr from Decide DeKalb Development Authority, Terreta Rodgers from Amazon, and Jevon Gibson from the Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority also addressed the crowd.



A photo gallery and the recording of the full event will be made available in the coming days at <https://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org/news-press/>.

About the State of the County/Agency Series

The Council for Quality Growth hosts 10 'State of' events across the region, including 8 counties and 2 agencies. We work in close collaboration with the office of the County Chairs in Cherokee, Clayton, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale, as well as with leadership at MARTA and the Atlanta BeltLine, to provide a platform for our counties and agency partners deliver an annual update on achievements, projects, and the future that is specifically geared toward the business community and the Council's membership. A full calendar of the Council's 2024 Signature Events, including the State of the County/Agency series, can be viewed and downloaded here: [2024 Programs Calendar](#)

About the Council for Quality Growth

The Council for Quality Growth is a trade organization that works to ensure continued growth and economic success for generations to come by providing advocacy, information, and education to its members. In its 39th year, the Council is committed to the mission of promoting balanced and responsible growth and is proactively involved in the formulation of policy and legislation critical to the growth and development industry. The Council addresses, head-on, strategic economic planning, infrastructure needs, and tough quality-of-life issues throughout the metro Atlanta region and state. For more information, please visit <http://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org>.

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