

**State of the City – Kathy Taylor**  
**Delivered on Tuesday, September 8, 2009**  
**Tulsa, Oklahoma**

I'm here to give my final State of the City speech but while I'm responsible for delivering it, it's not about **me** – it's about **We**.

**Together** we have moved Tulsa forward. **Together** we have kept this great city growing. **Together** we have made tough decisions in tough times.

Together we have remained **true** to those who preceded us and **honest** with those who follow us.

So **together** we can agree that the **state of Tulsa** is STRONG. And, the nation agrees.

Forbes Magazine says we're one of the country's five most **livable** cities and we're *the* **No. 2** midsize city for "Best Places for **Job Growth**." *Not second best in Oklahoma or even the Midwest*; no, **second best for JOB growth in this nation**.

The publication Relocate America suggests people do just that – **to right here**.

Our City-County library system was given **five stars** as one of the **best in the nation** by the Library Journal Index.

A noted travel publication calls us one of the **10 outstanding travel** destinations in North America.

Just days ago Tulsa was named **best** cost of living and the **second** best place to live

And our **amazing** new BOK Center has the ninth highest ticket sales in the nation and 23<sup>rd</sup> **on the planet**.

And here's a stat that is no surprise to anyone in this room, one of the City's best partners, our Chamber of Commerce was named the **best Chamber** in America by people who should know – The American Chamber of Commerce Executives.

We have much to be proud of. We're **protecting** the best of our *past* while **building** for the *future* with your involvement in PLANITULSA – the *first* **comprehensive update** to Tulsa's land use plan in THREE decades.

We're **paving** streets, **planting** trees and **fighting** fat.

But there is **no duty** as serious for a government as keeping its **citizens safe**.

We have a new state of the art 911 center to respond quickly when **minutes matter most**.

We still hope to **hire 18 new police officers**. I know there is disagreement on hiring these officers but when Washington D.C. wants to send some of our tax money back to Tulsa **to keep our citizens safe** – I would like to take it.

We are building a state-of-the art new forensics lab in partnership with OSU—providing better environmental controls for 36,000 evidence items we gather each year to **solve crimes**.

And, we're turning the **corner** on crime. Our anti-gang unit is on schedule to confiscate 180 illegal firearms this year.

We're **cracking down on meth labs**. *Our police officers and firefighters are working* **TOGETHER** to counter the new shake and bake process of creating meth – which causes both **deadly fires** and **deadly addiction**.

Police and fire are where the **rubber meets the road** in this devastating epidemic – in the trenches. Will you join me in saying **thanks** to those who **risk their lives** to keep us safe everyday – our Tulsa police and firefighters!

We're *fighting gangs* and we're *forced to crack down* on these kids we have somehow lost along the way. A **special thanks** to outgoing **U.S. Attorney David O'Meilia**, a true public servant, – his partnership with me on the Building a Safer Tulsa summit brought hundreds of Tulsans and national experts together to **find and IMPLEMENT** solutions to keep **all Tulsans** safe—Thanks Dave.

We're all continuing to work full time to ensure we don't lose more children to the streets, gangs and drugs with programs to engage our kids like **Junior Achievement** and **Ijobs**.

We have boosted our efforts with **mentoring** and other programs to help more kids learn during out-of-school time. Mentoring will help more than 500 more students this year with two groups being mentored by **Tulsa musicians** thanks to the leadership of a great Tulsan, **Barry Epperley**.

Oklahoma has the highest **rate of female incarceration** in the nation, and **83 percent of kids** in Tulsa Public Schools are living in poverty, so there are lots of kids in our city who have few positive role models and are most at risk.

We know that if a child can't **read by third grade**, that child's chance of going from the **cradle to prison** is increased dramatically.

We talk a lot about change in politics, but there is no **change as dramatic** as a child reading her *first complete* sentence. That is the **bedrock** of a lifetime of achievement.

I'm very proud of the impact **together** we have made in education—from the top **pre-k** education in the nation, to community schools, to **Mentoring** to **Tulsa Achieves**. We have

over 80 teach for America teachers in Tulsa—to enhance the work done by the dedicated group who has the MOST important job in Tulsa—**our teachers**.

Education **can** change the future.

It will continue to be a focus of **my time** and **my passion**. I hope it will be of yours.

We have also expanded our work on the Tulsa Youth Intervention Project that has served about **300 gang-involved** youth this year. Our best-practice re-entry programs—plainly said – helping people in prison leave prison and get a job, learn how to parent and be involved in our community...we have graduated over 100 former offenders in these programs. That means a **better life for one** and **less crime for all**.

With Tulsa's first **Veterans Advisory Council**, and thanks to some great **innovative judges**, we started a Veterans Treatment Court, helping out combat veterans get the help they need and deserve.

I'm proud that we're doing all of this **with less**. We're stretching our dollars and we're stepping up because it's **smart**, but also because **we've had to**. More than 25 percent of our city employees have now been trained in **lean processes**, thanks to our partnership with **Tulsa Tech**. Our trained high performance government teams have implemented over \$5 million in city process savings.

It's been a tough economic run for our city, state and nation. As you know, to *balance our budget*, we've had to ask **every** city employee to take furlough days, which means a smaller paycheck for their families. They **all** did their part—every single one of them, from police to fire, from public works to finance. Yet our city employees continue to work hard and with passion.

So, **join me in saluting** every **clerk** behind every window, every **person** who makes our trash disappear and every **worker** who fills those potholes we so loathe. Let me ask those city employees who are with us today **to stand**...so we may thank them and **they can share** that thanks with the rest of our team. Thank you all.

And I'm pleased that **over 1,000 of those GREAT city employees** are working out of our new City Hall. City Hall is a reflection of a community and our city hall reflects the **beauty** and **vibrancy** of Tulsa.

We have consolidated five city facilities into one building – saving *space, energy* and *time* and encouraging teamwork by breaking down physical silos that separated departments.

We'll get through this tough real estate market and Tulsa will shine with a City Hall that reflects the **new kind of energy** we have **awakened together**.

Tulsa has always been **forward looking**. We have a solid financial base community wide because 100 years ago people were working for **what was next**. We're still doing that.

We've created the **entrepreneurial spirit** business plan competition to bring **alive** that spirit which **IS Tulsa – the entrepreneurial spirit**...we've created the Tulsa Collaboratorium as an incubator to provide those who are **building for tomorrow** the basic **tools** they need **today**.

Indeed a company that began as a seed of an idea and won our Spirit entrepreneur competition is now operating in over a dozen states. Seeking Sitters is a woman-owned business that provides childcare service nationwide. Its' **smart**, it's **successful** and it's **ours**.

We are also fueling the entrepreneurial fire with the **Tulsey awards**. We'll continue paying tribute to the "wildcatters" of

our City –both those who **laid** the foundation and those who are **ensuring** our best days still lie ahead.

While our entrepreneurs are inventing the jobs of tomorrow we're working at some old-fashioned *tree planting*. Tulsa has bounced back from the devastating ice storm in **record time** but our trees haven't. Tulsa is green country and we've been known as "tree city USA" for decades.

So our goal is to plant the 20,000 trees we lost by 2010 and we've got **10,000** in the ground. But we need your help to get this done. We're getting our hands **dirty** and creating **roots for a better tomorrow**.

But life is **not** all work and no play in Tulsa. We're building a fantastic baseball park with ONEOK field that will **anchor** a revitalization of the Greenwood District. I know **it's tough** to make a **long-term** investment in these times, but when we hear the *first crack of the bat* on April 8, 2010 – there **will be** cheering **across** the City.

And the BOK Center – **W O W**. It opened only ONE year ago.

I want to thank every one who had a hand in conceiving and building the BOK Center – from Mayor LaFortune to the Vision 2025 team, specifically the **quiet leadership of the late Jerry Lasker**, and to the voters. And thanks to everyone who has had a hand in making its first year a success – including the one and only general manager of the BOK Center – **John Bolton**. He has more energy than I do and never stops with new ideas for ensuring the BOK has something for everyone.

We've truly had a mammoth **piece of art** spring up in our downtown. We have the **largest number** of art deco buildings between Miami and New York and I believe we now have the **most beautiful building** between those two cities as well.

Paul McCartney made our arena the **only indoor** concert of his recent American tour. When he sings "**Let it Be**" we

answer – “**We Are.**” We are a city that **dreams big** and **works hard**. We are a city with a **beautiful** past and a **brilliant** future.

Now I wasn't sure whether to put the next piece under work or play as sometimes it feels like both. But there is **less** of us here today. **Not fewer** but **less** of us thanks to so many participating in the Tulsa Million Mile challenge.

More than 2,000 Tulsans have logged onto TulsaMillionMiles.com and more than 798,000 miles of exercise has been logged so far. Join us in anything active from swimming, rollerblading, walking or biking. You tell me – work or play?

We're fighting obesity because we must **for our health** and **for our prosperity**. So I challenge all of you to join our **movement** – *literally*. You'll feel better, look better and live better.

In my initial state of the City, I asked you to **become mentors** and you responded *overwhelmingly*. So before I close I have another challenge if I may.

*Local food pantries need help.* Emergency food pantries in Tulsa have seen a 40 percent increase in demand. The Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma distributed more food in July than ever in its history. Hunger knows no **political party**. Hunger knows no race or age. No child should ever go to **bed** hungry. But in Oklahoma, **one** in every **five children** has the risk of going **to bed hungry**.

I challenge everyone here to help. We can celebrate our amazing city but we can't turn our heads to basic needs. There are many food programs in Tulsa you can support. This is hunger awareness month—**be aware and be involved**.

And finally, a personal note – a few thank yous.

To my family I say **thank you**. This job certainly stole some of our time together. But mainly I want to thank you for standing with me. When the editorial cartoons depicted me as a Queen, I **worried most** about it hurting you. Me – I just straightened my tiara.

To my colleagues in the mayor's office who have shown me the true meaning of **friendship**.

To my **friends and partners** who are **mayors** in our region, our state and federal legislators, our Governor, our tribal leaders, our County officers and of course the City Council – I say **thank you**.

We didn't always see **eye to eye** and we went **toe to toe** from **time to time**. But I hope and believe our differences were rooted in our common passion – making Tulsa an even better place to live and raise a family. We still have a few months to continue together and it's my hope and wish that we do it constructively and to the degree possible, arm in arm—for after all—***we are colleagues in a common enterprise—serving the people of Tulsa.***

Finally to Tulsans, ***thank you. Thank you*** for entrusting me with our *great* city. Remember, government is never about “me”—**it is about you – those who cast the vote and make the decision**..for every elected official...in our precious democracy—a vote is a voice, your voice.

I've *loved* being mayor. It's been **harder** but ***better*** than I could have ever imagined. I'm leaving the mayor's office in December, but let me assure you that **my passion to make life better in Tulsa will never leave me**.

Thank you. God Bless you, God Bless Tulsa and God Bless the United States of America.