

Mayor G.T. Bynum's State of the City Address
November 15, 2022

Thank you for that introduction and to all of you for being here today. It is a great time to be a Tulsan, to be an American and an Oklahoman, to live at the converging point of the Creek, Cherokee, and Osage Nations.

We have a lot to talk about today, but it is important that you know I plan to speak not about my own amazing individual achievements (!) - but on behalf of a broad team that is working hard every day to make these things happen. In my life, that starts with my family.

I am thankful for the love and support I have received throughout a very challenging time in this job from my entire extended family, represented here today by the light in my life, wife Susan, my Mom Suzie, my Uncle John, and my lifelong hero who at 95 years of age is still passionate about the great things happening in Tulsa, our city's 31st mayor and my granddad, Bob LaFortune.

I go to work every day with the best team of public servants you will find in any city in America at the City of Tulsa. There's over 3,500 of them, and most of them couldn't make it to lunch today because they are out saving lives, apprehending criminals, fixing water lines, beautifying your parks, making sure your tax dollars are spent efficiently, picking up your trash, rebuilding your streets, protecting your homes and businesses from flooding, and so much more. That's actually one of the challenging things about being the CEO of the sixth largest employer in town - we do such a diversity of things that impact your daily life that it is hard for people to appreciate all the City of Tulsa team really does. But I am so grateful for them, and proud to work with them every day.

Part of that team is our Tulsa City Council, my partners in all we are going to talk about today. I loved my eight years of service on the City Council because it is the only place where you take nine Tulsans from different parts of town, with different beliefs and life experiences - all of whom share one thing in common: they want to do the best they can for their neighbors and the people they love. And you put those nine Tulsans with that motivation together in a room and ask them to work through some of our community's biggest issues together.

It can be an incredibly hard job, and I want to thank Councilor Hall-Harper, Councilor Cue, Councilor Patrick, Councilor McKee, Councilor Arthrell-Knezek, Councilor Dodson, Councilor Decter-Wright, Councilor Lakin, and Councilor Fowler for their devotion to Tulsa over the last two years.

I also want to congratulate Councilors-elect Laura Bellis, Grant Miller, and Christian Bengel who I am looking forward to working with over the remainder of my time as mayor.

And I want to thank our City Auditor, Cathy Carter, for all she and her team do to ensure the City's operations meet the high standards Tulsans should expect.

I also want to thank the team at the Tulsa Regional Chamber. I know I'm biased, but independent groups have repeatedly named our chamber as the best in the country. Mike Neal leads a team that is always focused on the next opportunity. Mike also has one of the best eyes for talent that you will find in any organization. The partnership we have forged between the City and the Chamber over the last six years - in which the Chamber brings prospects to the table and the City facilitates their investment in our community - has been a powerful combination. I am so grateful for this partnership. To Mike and the whole Chamber team, thank you.

We are living through the greatest moment of investment in the history of Tulsa. I am going to talk about that progress today, but before I do so I think it is important to understand how and why we are doing this. What is our purpose as a community right now?

I believe the citizens of Tulsa have twice elected me mayor because they want our community to show America how people can work together to address our greatest challenges. They want the opposite of what we've just endured for the last couple months, in which the extremes who promote a divisive us-versus-them storyline get the microphone.

In Tulsa, we have not overcome challenge after challenge through our history by exploiting our differences and pitting one against the other. We have risen to each challenge by pulling together as a community, finding common ground and pursuing high goals.

Our success is rooted in finding common ground and aiming high, and the purpose of everything you're going to hear today is to show the rest of a divided country that this is still possible. The greatest threat to America in 2022 is the division of our own people, and Tulsa can be an example of how to heal and how to thrive.

In my time as mayor, the City Council and I have set the goal of making Tulsa a globally competitive, world-class city. That's a pretty broad goal, so we've defined that along three main lines: we have to be a safe city; we have to be a city of opportunity for everyone; and we have to be a city where this generation of Tulsans is building the city they want to leave to the next.

The greatest public safety challenge facing Tulsa is police staffing. The nature of this challenge has fundamentally shifted in recent years. During my eight years as a Tulsa city councilor, this was purely a matter of funding. We just needed more money to hire more officers. So - as you can see in this graph - over the last six years, the Tulsa City Council and I prioritized a dramatic increase in Tulsa Police Department funding.

But the toxic national dialogue that demonizes police officers has made police department staffing significantly more difficult for every major city in America - and Tulsa, despite strong local support for law enforcement, is no exception. In the past year, the City Council and I funded the largest starting pay increase in Tulsa Police Department history. In the most recent TPD Academy, for which we funded 30 positions, we only identified 11 candidates who met the high standards of the Department. So, we have to do more.

I am announcing today that the new signing bonus for a graduate of the Tulsa Police Academy will be \$15,000. Having only filled 11 of 30 budgeted positions in our most recent academy, we will use those savings to fund an increased signing bonus program at no additional cost.

At the same time as these recruiting difficulties, we are seeing the highest rate of retirements in years.

Today we ask Tulsa Police officers to not just apprehend criminals, but to be mental health experts and handle every unpredictable situation with a camera strapped to their chest - all while knowing that out of the thousands of hours they work each year, all it takes is a 30-second out-of-context clip on the internet to tarnish their reputation or even ruin their career.

So, I understand why it is harder to find people willing to be a police officer these days. But accepting this as just the way it has to be is not an option for us when we rely on the Tulsa Police Department to keep Tulsans safe. If recruitment is down and retirements are up, we have to identify better ways of using the force we have. And this is what led us to what officers are calling the biggest advancement in policing since radios in cars were deployed in squad cars.

Over the course of the next year, the Tulsa Police Department will establish a Real Time Information Center. The idea behind a Real Time Information Center is that we deploy video technology that officers in the field can use to more quickly and accurately apprehend criminals. The Department will work with neighborhood leaders and businesses to place cameras in areas where they are needed, all while thoughtfully addressing privacy concerns.

Right now, we rely on a victim or witness to call 9-1-1 and verbally convey the details of an emergency. Then the 9-1-1 call taker relays that information to an officer in the field, who reads it on a computer screen and goes to the scene.

With a real time information center, cameras monitor areas and can identify a crime occurring without the need for a report. Images from the video can be sent to the responding officer so they know exactly what the suspect is wearing and looks like.

At the recommendation of the U.S. Department of Justice, Councilor Phil Lakin and I went with Chief Franklin to Las Vegas earlier this year to see one of the nation's best real time information centers in action. We watched video of an assault in an alleyway with no witnesses. In Tulsa, the victim would have been helpless because they couldn't call 9-1-1 and no one else saw this happening. Thanks to the real time information center, officers were immediately sent to the scene and the assailant was arrested.

Our real time information center will include not just video cameras, but also license plate readers. In fact, we've already positioned a number of those readers around the city and they have yielded remarkable results. In only a few months, they have led to over 50 arrests and more than \$600,000 in stolen property recovered, including 60 vehicles.

Tulsa Police are also already using these readers to solve homicide cases. Just three weeks ago, a man was murdered in the middle of the night in a field North of Downtown. To our knowledge, there were no witnesses. But Tulsa Police officers discovered that he had a van, and they used license plate readers to flag that his van had left Tulsa and gone to Fort Worth after the crime occurred. Officers traveled to Fort Worth, interviewed a man they found with the van, and he confessed to the murder. Our new real time information center will make more efficient use of officer time, it will make it harder for criminals to get away with their crimes, and it will make Tulsa a safer city.

When it comes to the Tulsa Fire Department, the City Council and I funded this year the largest increase in pay in the history of the Department and we are maintaining authorized staff levels. Our great challenge in the TFD is an aging fleet. Old fire engines are breaking down at an alarming rate. Tulsa taxpayers are funding millions to replace this fleet, but each truck costs hundreds of thousands of dollars and supply chain issues have slowed the replacement schedule. We are making progress, but we will need to do more in the year ahead.

The Tulsa Fire Department continues to be independently ranked as one of the best in the nation, with an ISO certification of 1. This, combined with Tulsa's independent rating as one of the two safest cities in America for flood prevention, has a direct impact on reduced insurance rates for Tulsa businesses and homeowners.

Like much of the country, Tulsa is experiencing a youth mental health crisis. Due to the heightened stresses of this unique time in history, the U.S. Surgeon General declared a nationwide crisis in Dec. 2021 because so many children were experiencing life-threatening mental health issues, up to and including suicide.

It is now estimated that 4,000 Tulsa County children attempt suicide annually, and in the last year a record 1,300 kids in mental health distress flooded Tulsa County emergency rooms.

For Tulsa families and children in mental health crisis, the gaps in the treatment system are enormous. With no other options, children often wait in a hospital bed for days or weeks until a mental health bed opens up somewhere in Oklahoma. Since 2019, we've seen a 520 percent increase in hospital emergency room hours for children with mental health needs. The system is overloaded.

4,000 kids. That means on average, today – while we are gathered together – 10 kids across Tulsa County will attempt to end their lives. We have to do better.

So today, I am announcing that I will work with the Tulsa City Council to identify \$1 million in funding to create Tulsa's first "mental health urgent recovery center" dedicated entirely to serving children and families in crisis 24/7. This model, called YES Tulsa (Youth Evaluation Services), will be a one-stop triage center for families in immediate mental health crisis. The City

will partner with Tulsa County and the State of Oklahoma to build it, and the State will join the federal government in paying for its ongoing operations.

I am grateful for the teams at Counseling & Recovery Services, Healthy Minds Policy Initiative and the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services for their work on this life-saving initiative.

The second pillar of our plan to make Tulsa a globally competitive, world class city is that we have to be a city of opportunity for everyone. If people don't perceive opportunity in Tulsa, they will not come here or stay here. We have a number of historic efforts under way right now on this front.

Just a few blocks to our East, some of the best forensic researchers in the world are searching Oaklawn Cemetery for the missing graves of 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre victims. We are focused on Oaklawn Cemetery because it is the one location where we have actual documented evidence that 18 Race Massacre victims were buried. I am thankful that this generation of Tulsans is committed to doing this incredibly challenging work, as we seek to do right by our neighbors.

Speaking of the Race Massacre, one of the great stories of resilience in Tulsa history was the rebuilding of Greenwood after it happened. Only decades later, through the federal Urban Renewal program, was so much of the area immediately North of I-244 leveled to the ground. And most of it remained like that for decades. We are working to change that.

Last year, I asked a group of proven North Tulsa leaders to work with PartnerTulsa in developing a plan for the area known as Kirkpatrick Heights and Greenwood, which you can see on this map.

All of this land is owned by either the City of Tulsa or the Tulsa Development Authority. I told members of the leadership committee that the decision on what to do with this land is in their hands. Whatever they believe is the best use for this land, we as a City will facilitate it. The City of Tulsa is not going to dictate how this land is used. We want it to be used in service to North Tulsans, and we will rely on North Tulsans to lead that decision making process.

The result will be the Kirkpatrick Heights and Greenwood Master Plan. In its final stages of development, after extensive public engagement and feedback, this plan will guide the development of one of the most important sites in our entire city for decades to come. It is set to go before the Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission next Tuesday and the Tulsa City Council by the end of the month for consideration and adoption.

We will then move into the community-led implementation phase, which includes establishment of a governance model and development of high-profile projects that will begin to turn the community's vision into a reality. The City Council and I have already seeded the first \$2 million

toward projects in this implementation phase so it can get off and running in a tangible way as quickly as possible.

I want to thank the members of that leadership committee, who have spent an extraordinary amount of time over the last two years working to establish this plan.

Another key area for us in establishing Tulsa as a city of opportunity is with our immigrant community. Tulsa is the first city in Oklahoma to host a citizenship ceremony every month at City Hall, and this year we celebrated the 900th newest American to become a citizen in one of our ceremonies. When you attend these and meet people who have risked all they have and left their homeland because they view the United States and Oklahoma and Tulsa as beacons of freedom and opportunity it fills you with so much pride in our city, our state, and our country. And it makes you want Tulsa to live up to the faith immigrants have placed in our city.

Our program to make Tulsa the best city in America for immigrants is called the New Tulsans initiative. Through the New Tulsans Initiative, we are not just hosting ceremonies - we are breaking down legal barriers to citizenship. In the Tulsa Metro right now, there are thousands of people who are eligible to become citizens but many of them have costly legal work that needs to be addressed. Thanks to a partnership with the YWCA, we are paying for that legal work so it isn't a roadblock. We also know there are many highly talented immigrants who come to Tulsa but can't get a job comparable to the one they had in their homeland because their advanced degree or certification hasn't been translated. Thanks to the American Rescue Plan, we are paying for services to translate those advanced degrees and certifications so immigrants can qualify for the jobs they have earned through education - creating opportunity for them and enhancing our local workforce.

Our third key to being a globally competitive, world-class city is building the city we want to leave to future generations. The unprecedented level of investment we are seeing in Tulsa at this moment is occurring across both the public and private sectors.

I will never forget the ribbon-cutting for our new convention center ballroom, just down the hall from here, that had cost taxpayers \$55 million. We opened it in the early stages of the pandemic, with about 10 masked people in a 40,000 square foot room - hoping one day we would see it actually be used. Talk about a bet on Tulsa's future!

This year, just two years removed from that moment, we are not just climbing back to pre-pandemic levels - we are crushing them! In 2022, we celebrated the biggest year in the history of Tulsa tourism.

2022 also saw voter approval of the City's franchise agreement with Public Service Company of Oklahoma. The biggest change Tulsans will see from this new agreement is the establishment of a fund to maintain our highway lighting systems properly and to begin the process of burying power lines citywide.

After talking about it since the mid-1960s, next year we will complete construction of a new lake in the Arkansas River starting at 29th & Riverside and extending for three miles North, past Downtown Tulsa. The new Williams Bridge will be over twice as wide as the old bridge, accommodating pedestrians and cyclists alike, and will arc out over the new lake. It will also be illuminated at night, creating a new iconic feature along the river for Tulsa. With a whitewater flume as part of the project, this new lake will be situated right next to the greatest park gift to any city in American history - the Gathering Place – and it will change the way Tulsans use the river for recreation.

We are also building a museum worthy of the greatest collection of American art and history West of the Mississippi at Gilcrease Museum, slated for completion in late 2024. Thomas Gilcrease donated much of this collection to our city, and as Tulsans you own it. I want to thank the Helmerich family and so many other donors for their generosity in supplementing the funds contributed by the citizens of Tulsa to make this the best museum it can be.

Thanks to voters, we have park improvements underway citywide. One I am particularly excited about is the new playground under construction at Whiteside Park, off of 41st Street between Harvard and Yale. This will be the first public playground of its kind in Tulsa, and is being built so it is accessible to children with special needs. But it is going to be so cool that kids of every ability will want to use it right alongside one another.

Of course, there is no construction project that costs more than our ongoing street revitalization program. I don't know if you've noticed, but there's a little bit of street construction going on! What most people don't realize is that only about forty percent of the time spent on a given street project is the work on the actual street. The majority of the time is spent updating the utilities that run underneath our street grid across the city - water, sewer, gas, cable, telephone and electric. You don't want to spend \$5 million replacing a street, only to leave the 1920s water line underneath it waiting to collapse. So, while I know this program has required a lot of patience, Tulsans are doing this the right way so that our citywide infrastructure network is modernized for decades to come.

I also want to put into perspective the enormity of what we've accomplished on streets and infrastructure to date. Since the start of the Fix Our Streets program in 2009, we have spent over \$827 million and reconstructed or repaved 2,091 miles of streets. To put that in perspective, that's the equivalent of building a two-lane road from Tulsa to Canada. Or from Tulsa to the Atlantic Ocean. Or from Tulsa to Monterrey, Mexico.

We've also spent \$167 million replacing 432 miles of water lines. That's the equivalent of building a water line to Austin.

And we've spent \$309 million replacing 201 miles of sewer lines. That's the equivalent of building a pipe to transfer all of our human waste to... Well, I'm going to be honest. I couldn't think of a place within 201 miles to describe dumping all our waste without getting myself in

trouble, so just picture in your own mind wherever, whatever – or whoever! – you would like all that to go to.

This tremendous investment is allowing us to finally shift more toward proactive maintenance with an ongoing paving program that costs less, takes less time and is like getting a new street every five or six years.

And while there is so much happening from a public investment standpoint, we still have more to do. Thanks to careful financial management by our team at the City, we have approximately \$118 million in bonding capacity available for capital improvement projects without raising taxes.

I am announcing today that after the first of the year, the City Council and I will begin the public process to develop a package for voter consideration in 2023.

The citizens of Tulsa continue to invest in themselves, and the private sector is moving ahead on a number of exciting projects too.

The 222 North Detroit tower is open and available. I want to thank the team at Devon Energy for building a beautiful office tower that will bring even more people into the Greenwood District.

Elliot Nelson and his team are moving forward at a fast pace with the construction of Santa Fe Square in the Blue Dome District.

Our second Costco is under construction! I want to thank a great Tulsa businessman and my friend, David Charney, for his work to make this happen in Northeast Tulsa.

Scheels is bringing their first store in the State of Oklahoma to South Tulsa. For those of you not familiar with Scheels, this is what the inside of one looks like. It is a true retail experience, and the anticipated capital expenditure to build it is over \$130 million. And on average nationally, 25 percent of Scheels customers come from over 50 miles away. It is a regional retail attraction which will bring more people and more dollars into Tulsa.

American Airlines continues on the single largest economic development investment in Tulsa history with upgrades to their maintenance facility - the largest commercial aviation maintenance facility in the world, right here in Tulsa.

We are so fortunate to a visionary new owner of the Tulsa Oilers, Andy Scurto, who is not just focused on the team but is also building the new Oilers Ice Center at 41st and Yale which will remind Tulsans of the old Williams Center Forum, with an ice rink available for recreation and events, as well as a restaurant and meeting spaces.

We also have a number of historic public-private partnerships under way that will have a profound impact on the lives of Tulsans.

Helping to facilitate so much of this private sector investment is the team at PartnerTulsa, the City's economic development authority. As many of you will recall from my speech last year, we merged five old City authorities and offices into one new organization focused on using economic development to create equality of opportunity in our city. Working directly alongside our team at the City, this new organization makes investment easier and more predictable, and in its first year alone they facilitated \$275 million in private sector investment into Tulsa – and they are on pace to exceed that in their second year! I am grateful for the team at PartnerTulsa and everyone on our team at the City of Tulsa who works every day to make this an attractive city for investment.

Thanks to the American Rescue Plan and programs like the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods and the U.S. Department of Commerce's Build Back Better Regional Challenge, we are experiencing a massive flow of federal dollars into the Tulsa Metro.

The Build Back Better Regional Challenge is a great example of how we are competing at the highest level for these dollars. Over 500 cities across America applied for this major economic development grant. In Tulsa, we did what we always do when we want to compete at our highest ability: we collaborated across a broad range of organizations, including INCOG, Tulsa Innovation Labs, Tulsa Ports, Oklahoma State University, the Osage Nation, the City of Tulsa, Partner Tulsa and the Tulsa Regional Chamber. And in the end, our team was one of only 21 selected from across the country to receive a \$38 million grant that will be combined with other funds to grow the advanced mobility industry in the Tulsa Metro - including industrial capabilities at the Port of Inola, research facilities at OSU-Tulsa and a 114-mile drone testing corridor. And here's the best part: these investments are independently projected to yield 30,000 to 40,000 new jobs with an economic impact of between \$3.5 and \$5 billion in the first three years alone!

So, we are experiencing substantial growth for our city. But I want to spend a moment to talk about those who are not sharing in this expansion of prosperity: our homeless community.

In the last few years, we've seen a series of forces collide: decreased shelter capacities due to social distancing; increased evictions amid economic fluctuations; increased mental health crises amid the profound stress of disruptions to daily life caused by the global pandemic. And these are just to name a few. The result is an increased number of Tulsans experiencing homelessness.

In the past, cities were typically a pass-through for federal funds. We would receive funds from HUD and then pass them on to social service agencies, trusting that they could handle it from there.

In Tulsa, over the last two years the City has funded over \$14 million on homeless initiatives in this way. This represents a 2,500 percent increase in our average annual funding for homelessness programs. We have used these funds to focus on things like opening emergency shelters, rapid re-housing, outreach services, medical services and financial assistance.

The City also continues to fund a number of programs that help with some of the larger issues that can contribute to homelessness. These include the Better Way program, which pays people to work on a City crew beautifying public spaces for the day and connects them with social services agencies who can provide them the assistance they need. The Community Response Team, which consists of a Tulsa Firefighter, Tulsa Police Officer, and a mental health case worker who respond to mental health crises in the field. The Tulsa Sobering Center offers an alternative to incarceration for people who are picked up for public intoxication, where they can receive treatment if they want it. And we recently opened Tulsa's Financial Empowerment Center, which provides free one-on-one financial counseling to residents regardless of income. One of my favorite recent statistics is that our Financial Empowerment Center helped 138 Afghan refugee families file their taxes for the very first time and brought back over \$600,000 in tax refunds to our community!

And through the pandemic, there have been acts of charity that didn't necessarily make the news but represent the true Tulsa spirit.

When the polar vortex hit and homeless Tulsans were stranded outside in subzero temperatures, local churches opened their doors and gave them shelter until the storm passed. One pastor said this was the best thing his church ever did.

When homeless Tulsans needed food, Tulsa restaurants like the McNellie's Group and 3 Sirens Restaurant Group opened their doors to provide meals to those in need.

A local nonprofit, City Lights, operated a hotel for over a year serving homeless Tulsans who had been recently released from the hospital and needed a place to stay before they met protocols to enter a shelter. When they opened, they thought they would be running it for a few months. They ended up operating it for just shy of two years.

The reality is that there are thousands of Tulsans alive today and in housing because of stories like this and the tireless work of the partner agencies in A Way Home For Tulsa, because of the outreach work by the team at Housing Solutions, and the faithful devotion of organizations like John 3:16 and the Salvation Army. In the last year alone, A Way Home For Tulsa partner agencies housed over 1,100 households – a remarkable achievement. I am so grateful for every organization and every person in our community who is engaged in this hard work to help our neighbors.

What my fellow mayors in nearly every major American city today are realizing is that we still have to do more. And when I ask the experts in Tulsa what we lack, what is the greatest cause of homelessness in our city, what comes up over and over again is housing.

To understand our challenge here, I think it is important to differentiate what kind of housing we are talking about. There are basically five types of need:

First, there is the emergency shelter. This is short term, temporary lodging for people experiencing homelessness. In Tulsa, we are actually doing pretty well on standard shelter space except in instances of extreme weather. We are also one of the only major cities in America that lacks a low barrier shelter, which I will touch on in a moment.

There is transitional housing. This is temporary housing to help people transition from homelessness to a more permanent home. In Tulsa, we do not have enough of this.

There is supportive housing. This is affordable housing that includes support services for those being housed. In Tulsa, we do not have enough of this.

There is affordable housing. This is housing that uses subsidies to pay the difference between what the household can afford and the market rate. In Tulsa, we do not have enough of this. We have hundreds of Tulsans with vouchers in hand to pay for an apartment, who can't find anywhere to use them.

And then there is market housing. This is renter or owner-occupied housing with no subsidy. In Tulsa, we do not have enough of this either. In this regard, we are a victim of our own success as the growth in Tulsa's population over the last several years has absorbed much of what was previously available.

Again, every expert I talk with says this lack of housing is the greatest cause of the homelessness you see on our streets.

So, let's change that.

Today I want to announce three key initiatives to provide housing for any person in our community who wants it.

First, we will open a low barrier shelter in the year ahead. This will provide shelter facilities for those who - for any number of reasons - cannot utilize existing shelter facilities. Tulsa is one of the largest cities in America that does not have a low barrier shelter, and a significant percentage of the people you see on the streets of Tulsa are there because they have nowhere else to go. We will change that.

Second, we will work with the faith community to certify religious facilities throughout Tulsa as emergency shelters when our notorious Oklahoma weather creates extreme heat or frigid cold. These are the times when our traditional homeless shelters see their capacities pushed to the limit, so we will draw on one of Tulsa's greatest strengths - the generosity of our faith community - to supplement that capacity moving forward, ensuring that everyone who needs shelter in extreme weather can access it.

Lastly, and most importantly, I am announcing a goal for our community: the Tulsa Housing Challenge, in which we aim to spur and support over \$500 million in the next two years in total

housing investment across the city. This will include direct investment in housing, incentives for private sector investors, and anything else that expedites the closure of these housing gaps that exist in Tulsa today. The City has a part to play in this and we will. The federal government will play a part. We hope that our faith, philanthropic, health care, and business communities will help achieve this. And we expect our partners in tribal governments, Tulsa County and the State of Oklahoma to play an important part too.

The City will prioritize our resources toward those types of housing that represent the greatest need: transitional, supportive and affordable housing. Working together, we can unlock the creativity and ingenuity of Tulsans to make the significant difference we all know needs to be made in providing sufficient housing across all of the categories I outlined a moment ago.

In the coming weeks and months, I will convene critical partners across the community to finalize the action plan necessary to achieve this goal. If you want to join this historic effort, please shoot an email to housing@cityoftulsa.org and we will follow up with you directly.

\$500 million is a big goal, but that's the kind of goals we should set for ourselves in Tulsa. And I want to put this in context using an exciting housing initiative under way right now.

Envision Comanche is a project being led by the team at the Tulsa Housing Authority that will build 545 affordable and market rate housing units over the next several years. In September, the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development came to Tulsa to announce HUD will invest \$50 million in the project through their Choice Neighborhoods grant. Philanthropic donors are investing around \$40 million. And the citizens of Tulsa will invest \$100 million in this project alone, for a total project investment of \$190 million. That covers everything from constructing the housing itself to utilities and street rehabilitation. Envision Comanche is a historic step forward, but we will not be self-satisfied and rest on our laurels. We will do more.

I know the business community in Tulsa has felt the impacts of the crisis of homelessness as it has grown in Tulsa. If we do these three things, we will see fewer of our neighbors on the streets and more of them in housing where they can begin to receive the services they need to get back on their feet.

And this is not the finish line. This is progress. The City Council and I will announce by the end of the year a commission to further develop the City's role in addressing issues of housing and homelessness in our community. Working together, I believe we can set the standard for the country when it comes to addressing homelessness right here in Tulsa.

As you can see, the goals we have for the year ahead are big ones. And I have complete confidence we will achieve them, because I've seen what Tulsans are capable of in the last few years. The true character of a city is only revealed when it has been tested. And time and again over the last several years we have been tested. Tulsans have proven ourselves worthy of the reputation earned by our predecessors: Tulsa is a city of loving people who pull together to help

one another through hard times. I used to tell people that based on historical anecdotes from decades past. But not anymore.

Around rush hour on June 1st, a young Tulsa Police officer was in the parking lot of LaFortune Park issuing a routine traffic citation when he heard the alert issue over his radio that an active shooter was at Saint Francis Health System a mile away. He dropped what he was doing, jumped in his patrol car, and sped through traffic to the scene - his siren blaring as more information came in over the radio.

And the people he was racing to save were heroes in their own right: health care professionals. Health care professionals in Tulsa have spent the last two years working to save the lives of people from this entire region of the country as we all endured a global pandemic.

And Saint Francis Health System has carried a heavier load in treating COVID patients than any hospital in the Tulsa Metro. Every day, men and women go to work to save the lives of Tulsans on that campus. I have been to Saint Francis on four different occasions while the heroes who worked there labored to save the lives of Tulsa Police officers. I would be willing to bet there isn't a single person in this room who hasn't had your life or the life of someone you care about touched by the work of the men and women who work there.

And now they were the ones who needed to be saved.

That young Tulsa Police officer pulled into the complex and up to the Natalie Building, the first officer on the scene. As all of our officers are trained, their top priority is to get to the shooter in a situation like this. He and another officer immediately entered the building, with little information on the shooter or his whereabouts. We now know that four innocent lives had been taken, every one of them beloved. Dr. Stephanie Husen, Dr. Preston Phillips, Amanda Glenn, and William Love will live on in the hearts of this community.

I later asked Chief Franklin if the first officers to arrive were members of our SWAT team, and he said no - these were everyday Tulsa Police officers doing what they are trained to do. And so, into that building they went, ready to sacrifice themselves in defense of the lives of others.

The building was soon surrounded by first responders from law enforcement agencies throughout our region - all of whom had come to the scene to offer assistance. Tulsa Firefighters were providing medical assistance to anyone in need.

A veteran member of our SWAT team said to me: "Mayor, it was like the beaches of Normandy out there between Yale and this building. Everywhere I looked, first responders were running toward this building to help these people."

We talk a lot about strategies and technology, but I never want us to forget: THAT is what every first responder in this community is prepared to do every day they go to work. They will risk their life to save yours - and they do this far more often than you know.

Tulsa is a city that honors our heroes. And today, we have them in our midst. For today's State of the City, representing all of the first responders who ran toward danger that day, my guests are Officer Jon Grafton, Officer Carter McQuigg, Sergeant Brian Liang, and Officer Micah Baxter – the first four officers in the building that day. We are also joined today by representatives of Saint Francis Health System, including their CEO Cliff Robertson.

Please join me in showing our community's gratitude for these first responders, these health care professionals and the thousands they represent who save lives in our city every day.

We are a city that time and time again through our history – in our founding at the end of the trail of tears, through tornados and floods, through economic booms and busts, through a global pandemic and murder – has always pulled together to help one another move forward. And while we face great challenges ahead – homelessness, crime, creating greater opportunity for all – so long as we maintain that Tulsa spirit of neighborly love and cooperation, we will work together to address these too.

This is what makes Tulsa unique: we know our challenges, we are open about them, and we work together to overcome them. This is the approach that brought about the greatest moment of investment in our history. This is the approach that is making Tulsa a beacon of opportunity all around the world. This is the approach that has created so much positive momentum. And this is the approach that allows me to continue to say:

The state of our city is strong.

Thank you.