2026 State of the City
Delivered on November 10, 2026, by Mayor Monroe Nichols IV

Members of the City Council, Mr. Auditor, Tribal leaders, County and State elected officials, City employees, honored guests and my fellow Tulsans.

Tonight, for my second State of the City, I come to you from the Tulsa Fire Department Training Facility.

As I stand here, I thank the men and women who serve and protect us every day. To those serving in the police department, the fire department and at EMSA on behalf of a grateful city.

I start tonight's speech on a sober note. Yesterday, we lost a shining light in our city in an accident on the Turner Turnpike.

As we gather here today, we offer prayers to a family who has lost their pride and joy, to those recovering from their injuries, and to the entire Webster High School and West Tulsa community.

Scripture reminds us that God is close to the broken hearted and will provide divine comfort, and I ask everyone watching to join me in moment of silence for those impacted in yesterday's accident.

Thank you.

Tonight, we also celebrate the enduring legacy of Lessie Benningfield Randle, the last known living survivor of the Tulsa Race Massacre on her 112th birthday.

She was witness to the darkest days of our city's history and has been a critical part of us finding the courage to face it with honesty and a commitment to repair.

Mother Randle, Happy Birthday, and thank you for the torch you continue to carry for the victims and descendants of the Massacre and our city as a whole.

When I took office nearly two years ago, my message to Tulsans was clear: we have an amazing city, a proud history, and the makings of a bright future, but the challenges we faced were real.

I promised that although progress would not come easy or in a short amount of time, we would not be intimidated or shrink from any of them.

It is no secret that the last two years have produced disagreements putting some of our differences out in full view.

Conflicts points have caused some to ask the questions:

- Can the mayor and the council work together?
- Can the city and the private sector get on the same page on critical issues facing our city?
- Are we going to move forward as a community or will we suffer the paralysis of perpetual circular conversations of “ifs” or “maybes”?

OR

Can we find it within ourselves to take action and press forward together?

Twenty-three months later, I am proud to report that we are meeting our challenges with honesty, tolerance, curiosity, perseverance and hope I spoke about on my first day as your mayor. And we are now on the cusp of Tulsa’s next renaissance.

Tonight, I want to highlight the work over the last year and visit a bit about how we win the future.

By now, just about every Tulsan is familiar with the priorities of my Administration:

- End homelessness
- Improve student outcomes
- Expand our economy
- Increase our affordable housing stock
- Improve our relationships with Tribal governments
- Make Tulsa the Safest Big City in America

These priorities exist because our citizens deserve a city that is safe, full of opportunity and strives to leave no one behind.

As I begin, I am reminded that priorities are just words on paper if not met with resources to invest in making them real.

It has been said that budgets are moral documents, and as such, I start with reporting on the financial health of our city.

When I took office, it was widely reported that we had some serious decisions to make to strengthen our fiscal position.

Our administration took immediate action - not to create panic and chaos, but to approach our fiscal reality with honesty.

In my first budget, and in the FY 27 budget, we made strategic decisions that have resulted in revenues that outpaced spending for the first time since FY 22.

We did this while:

- Driving down the number of unhoused individuals on our streets
- Driving crime down by double digits
- Increasing our affordable housing stock
- Launching $100 million in roads and infrastructure investments and our five-year $500 million investment into water lines, sewer and stormwater systems; and
- Providing the resources necessary to complete the move-in to the Public Safety Center

Bottom line, we believe the resources we manage as a local government belong to the people, invested with the intention of improving the quality of life in our city.

And we are putting those dollars to work for Tulsans. And because of it, the State of our City is as strong and growing stronger every day.

Tulsa is well positioned to win the future, but we must remind ourselves that in the words of Robert F. Kennedy, *"The future is not a gift, it's an achievement"*. In other words, tomorrow is not guaranteed without action and a passive approach to solving problems is the best recipe for failure.

Homelessness

It is with this in mind that in March 2025, I signed an executive order laying out our approach to reduce homelessness focused on three driving strategies:

- Encampment decommissioning;
- Increasing shelter capacity and;
- Mitigating evictions

Last November, as a community, we launched Safe Move Tulsa, a partnership between the City of Tulsa, the business community and philanthropy.

Today, through the initiative - in a year's time, 820 previously unhoused individuals are now housed with the support they need to stabilize, and 25 encampments have been closed and remained closed.

The progress of Safe Move is not happening in isolation. Across our community we have housed over 1,000 individuals through various community-based organizations and programs compared to past years where we would have been lucky to house a couple hundred people.

This progress is layered on the newest asset in our effort, the Harbor - Tulsa's first low barrier shelter with a capacity for 180 individuals. The Harbor is a massive turning point in our effort to address the needs of those on the streets, while also ensuring we can quickly respond to challenges street homelessness presents for our community as a whole.

We have a long way to go, but it is clear our approach is working. According to our Point in Time Counts over the last three years, homelessness has gone from an increase of over 20% in January 2024 to a small decrease in street homelessness in 2026.

We have proved progress is possible. Yes, the $12 million invested in addressing homelessness over the last two years is not insignificant, but we have met the moment with budget transparency, accountability and positive outcomes.

So tonight we affirm our commitment to treat people with dignity and live up to the expectations Tulsans have for a safe and beautiful city. We don't have to choose one of the other, we choose to do both.

Over the last couple years, we have worked toward our goal of making Tulsa the Safest Big City in America. Delivering public safety is more complex today than it ever has been.

When I took office, we restructured how public safety was managed with the appointment of a public safety commissioner and the alignment of five departments within the chain of command.

Over the past few weeks, we have met with citizens across the city in a series of community conversations with the goal being to provide insights on what it takes to deliver on the promise of public safety in a city like ours.

The outcomes have been positive, focused on a north star of doing everything in our power to make sure Tulsa is safe, prepared, focused and accountable. And the numbers don't lie.

As we face the current and future challenges in doing the work to protect our city, I am proud of the leadership that exist at the Tulsa Fire Department with Chief Baker, at Animal Services with Sherri Carrier, at Municipal Court with Cheri Harvell, our first Director of

Emergency Management Adam Woodward and Tulsa Police Chief Jonathan Brooks whom I appointed just a couple months ago as Tulsa's 42nd police chief.

These public safety professionals, along with Commissioner Roberts, have been the face of public safety in Tulsa and have pursued an aggressive agenda to meet citizens where they are.

Yes - there is so much yet to be done, but we are delivering:

- Double digit drop in property crime and a 17% drop in homicides;
- Nearly fully staffed fire department that will continue to expand its alternative response teams;
- A new Department of Emergency Management;
- A 82% live release rate at Tulsa Animal Services, up 18% from the day I took office; and;
- A 10% increase in court appearances in Municipal Court and over $150,000 in waived fees and fines to ease the burden on residents who struggle to pay

The data is trending toward progress, but it's not easy or without focused action.

Our progress is rooted in our commitment to:

- Aggressive law enforcement operations - leading to 1,046 guns taken out the hands of those who wish to violate the law, the seizure of nearly 1,000 pounds in illegal drugs and a 96% violent crime solve rate.
- Our investment in our COPES 911 program and our alternative response team expansions, which has led to the diversion of nearly 90% of the mental health calls that come into 911 dispatch.
- Standing up of seCure Tulsa, which is bringing community-based solutions to youth violence in hot spots in our city; and
- Focusing on reducing domestic violence and ending the rape kit backlog in Tulsa.

We are also providing the care necessary to those in crisis and working within the community to break generational cycles that rob young people of their futures and neighborhoods of their sense of security.

We believe every neighborhood should be a place where children and families can thrive and that strong neighborhoods are the foundation of a strong city.

Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are the marker for most Tulsans on the vitality of our community as a whole. A resident may never attend a City Council meeting or read a citywide strategic plan. But they know whether their street is maintained, whether a vacant property is becoming a problem, whether they can get a question answered, and whether someone listens when they raise a concern.

Over the last two years, our Planning Office has led the way on engaging neighborhoods and empowering citizens to determine the future of the environment around them.

In just the last 24 months, we have graduated 146 Tulsans through our Neighborhood Academy, formally launched the Neighborhood Conditions Index Collaborative and are working to tackle longstanding neighborhood concerns block by block.

The feedback we have gotten from citizens led to a new investment to expand the capacity of our Code Enforcement Department, with a focus of ending the code enforcement backlog this fiscal year.

Children, Youth and Families

My great hope for Tulsa is that it is a city full of possibility for every child. I don't want our best and brightest young minds to feel forced to leave our city because opportunity doesn't exist here.

If you take the time to visit with any young person, you'll find out quickly that the perception of opportunity is formulated, so if we want to understand whether Tulsa is succeeding, or what the future holds, we have to look at the experiences of children and youth in our city.

Are they learning? Are they healthy? Do their families have the stability they need? Can they get to school safely? Access opportunities? And see a path toward a successful future?

Answering these questions and responding with a collective voice when gaps exists was the reason we created the Office of Children, Youth and Families with a focus of putting 15,000 additional children on a path to economic mobility by 2030.

That means helping more young people reach the milestones that open doors to a better future. From early childhood development and literacy, to high school graduation, post-secondary education, and entry into the workforce.

This work is not the work of one institution or one mayor or one superintendent or one non-profit partner, it is the work of the entire community.

This year, our community stakeholders have spoken with clarity on the agenda for our collective effort in the way of four priorities:

- Transportation access;
- Housing stability;
- Early literacy; and
- Youth workforce development

Thank you to the committed leaders who serve on the Tulsa Children's Cabinet and Action Alliances, representing over 150 Tulsans from youth to adults who are contributing to this important work.

As we move into 2027, with private funding, pilot programs will begin work to increase Pre-K enrollment, support early literacy, expand youth internship opportunities, conduct walkability audits to identify barriers to safe routes to school, and increase rental assistance for students pursuing post-secondary education or professional credentials.

Additionally, we have an opportunity to extend out of school time programming to over 1,100 Tulsa children with action currently pending at the City Council. It is my hope that the resources identified are appropriated and put to work for Tulsa families.

Every child in Tulsa deserves the chance to thrive. Every family deserves the opportunity to build a stable future. And we have a responsibility to do our part to make those things possible.

Economic Opportunity/Housing/Permitting

As we work to get the job done on behalf of every Tulsa family, we also must have the courage to take a step back and ask ourselves…How do we make sure opportunity reaches every part of Tulsa?

Ensuring economic mobility for young people and families also means a focus on the things that matter: job creation, a focus on housing affordability and working to drive down the cost of doing business in our city.

I know not everyone can quite feel it yet, but Tulsa’s economy is on the front end of a major boom.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, from March 2025 to March 2026, Tulsa County was the only one of Oklahoma’s three largest counties to record net employment growth and wages grew 4.4% outperforming the national average of 4.2%.

This year, aerospace and manufacturing helped drive a new chapter of economic growth in Tulsa, with multiple major industry leaders expanding their operations around Tulsa International Airport.

- Park Aerospace announced a $65 million investment in a new advanced composite materials manufacturing facility in the airport's north development area. The project is expected to create more than 100 high-paying jobs.
- Quantum Space established a new spacecraft manufacturing facility near the airport campus, bringing additional space-industry jobs and technical capabilities to our city.
- Lufthansa Technik executed a multi-million-dollar expansion at its Tulsa International Airport campus, nearly doubling its engine service bays and adding a new 25,000-square-foot component facility. This massive scaling project increases the company's regional footprint and is projected to create at least 100 new specialized aviation jobs by 2030.
- And Agile Space Industries has expanded its propulsion testing and manufacturing operations at the airport.

In addition to the activity at the airport…

This year, we took bold steps in further solidifying Tulsa's place in entrepreneurship with the completion of Greenwood Entrepreneurship at Moton, which opened earlier this year. And the investment to complete BOK Eastside Center for Entrepreneurship at Plaza Santa Cecilia, which we broke ground on just last month.

2026 also saw an expansion of our Main Street Network with the addition of the SoBo and Pearl Main Street Districts bringing additional resources, expertise, and support to local efforts to strengthen commercial corridors and help small businesses thrive.

These neighborhood-scale investments are an important part of how we build a stronger city. They create places where people want to spend time, places that give entrepreneurs room to grow, and places that help neighborhoods build on their own strengths. We do this while ensuring that economic opportunity is not limited to a few lucky members of our community but extended to all.

So if you're out keeping score - just this year we've:

- Expanded our role in aerospace;
- Become a major player in the space economy;

- Seen the announcement of nearly 5,500 new jobs and wage growth that outperformed the national average; and
- Brought new retail to help expand our sales tax base and access to quality products

These are just some of the examples of the enthusiasm that exists around Tulsa's economy and why we must prepare our city to take full advantage of it.

On the horizon are community decisions we are going to have to make and key questions we're going to have to answer:

- How do we continue to build and maintain our infrastructure?
- How do we shore up a workforce ready to fully meet the demand of business and industry?
- How do we make smart investments in the catalytic projects?

These questions are **not** "IF" we will do it but "HOW" we will come together to get it done.

A major part of guaranteeing economic prosperity for Tulsans is ensuring citizens have safe and affordable housing.

When I took office, we set a goal of increasing our affordable housing stock by 6,000 units by 2028 as part of our overall focus on meeting our broader housing needs.

Since December 2, 2024, we have 4,400 housing units completed or permitted with nearly 2,500 of those units meeting the affordability threshold.

Our housing policy remains focused on:

- Extending the opportunity of home ownership to more Tulsans;
- Reducing the number of Tulsans spending 30% or more of their income on housing; and
- Achieving success with our four-year goal of 6,000 new affordable units;

In 2023, Tulsa voters made a historic investment by approving the third Improve Our Tulsa package, with $75 million dedicated to housing initiatives.

Administered by the Tulsa Housing Impact Fund, these dollars are now beginning to support the construction of new homes and preserve existing affordable housing.

Since January 2026, leveraging the city's investment, this fund has raised an additional $54 million and approved six projects totaling $18 million which will give us over 500 affordable units.

What's more, the fund maintains an active pipeline of over 5,000 additional units representing approximately $200 million in development.

The work ahead is not going to be defined simply on how much money we spend, but the ease in which we can remove barriers for those doing the work.

For owners who are willing to help us meet our affordable housing goals we have two programs:

- With our brand new Permit Fee Reduction program, building permit fees can now be reduced by approximately 50% for owners who commit to bringing vacant properties online within two years and keeping them affordable for up to seven years.

And,

- Similarly, through our Nuisance Abatement Lien Waiver, the City will waive up to $10,000 in existing nuisance liens. Like the Permit Fee Reduction program, this program is available to new owners who commit to restoring a property within two years and maintaining affordability for up to seven years.

The Planning Office is also working on Residential Zoning Code Amendments to simplify zoning rules, while multi-departmental efforts and our Housing Acceleration Team - HAT - are streamlining permitting processes - having successfully issued complex permits within 30 days.

My administration has also prioritized evaluating the highest and best use of publicly owned land.

That evaluation process has already yielded gains for our city. Following an RFP issued in June for two long-held city parcels, developers were selected in September to construct approximately 150 new homes, with more than half set aside as affordable housing.

We are also leaning into innovative projects with our faith communities. In July, we launched our Faith-Based Housing Initiative with an inaugural cohort of five churches.

These churches gained expertise in zoning, timing, and development financing to prepare them to partner with developers and construct affordable housing on underutilized church land, utilizing our pre-approved plan T-Town HOME Catalog.

Finally, when it comes to housing and economic development, in 2027, we are committed to working to drive down the cost of doing business in Tulsa by reducing permit turnaround times.

My administration is currently working with City departments to identify critical areas to streamline the permitting process, which will drive down the permit wait time and create accountability for ensuring our internal processes don't slow down growth in our city.

I mention all these things because together they represent a larger shift in how we approach housing. We are using our financial resources, land, planning tools, and partnerships to make it easier to build and preserve the homes Tulsa needs, and that will pay off for our city for generations to come.

Health and Well-Being

Among the focus areas of my administration is our focus on health outcomes across our city.

While Congress and even the legislature have the ability to determine the funding environment regarding health and mental health, cities have to deal with the impact when those investments aren't enough to meet the need and realities in a community.

But meeting those needs is not something we shy away from as a community. Through the Office of Health and Well-Being and the Mayor's Health Coalition, we are aligning City departments, health providers, and community organizations around unified health priorities.

Our goal is to build on the programs that are already making a difference, identify where gaps remain, and coordinate our efforts around a shared strategy. A central pillar of our strategic plan is the Tulsa Children's Mental Health Initiative.

To date, this initiative has already served 713 children and families and trained over 600 providers, ensuring early identification, intervention, and accessible mental health resources for youth across our city.

We are also taking targeted action to promote wellness in historically underserved areas through the North Tulsa Wellness Initiative at Whitman and Hawthorne elementary schools, supported by a transformative $17.3 million TSET grant. Additionally, through a partnership with Humana at Eastside Rise, we are expanding access to health resources and community-based support.

Furthermore, utilizing opioid settlement dollars, we have made the initial investment in standing up the Forensic Assertive Community Treatment Team or FACT Team to deliver specialized intensive support, crisis intervention, and diversion services to individuals with severe behavioral health needs interacting with the justice system.

This work is not window dressing. It is critical for public safety. It is critical for families. And it is critical for Tulsa's future.

State legislative relations

I also want to take the time tonight to congratulate newly elected members of the Oklahoma legislature and newly elected statewide office holders.

Tonight, I've shared the progress of the second largest city in Oklahoma and a metropolitan area responsible for more than a quarter of the state's GDP.

We, along with the Oklahoma City metro, account for well over ⅔ of the state's GDP.

We are proud to contribute to the vitality of the state we all love and are proud to help spread prosperity that extends far beyond our city borders.

While our successes have been shared successes, for far too long our challenges have been seemingly been ours to manage alone.

I have appreciated my working relationship with Mayor Holt as we have put to bed the rivalry between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Now it is time to finally put to bed the urban/rural divide at the capitol.

We are all Oklahomans and thus we must work together to actually put us in the top ten of things that matter.

We will not win the future on billboards or sarcastic lines in speeches about the political differences between us and other states.

We will win the future on quality-of-life issues such as good schools, safe streets, first-class infrastructure and a business environment that prioritizes not just low cost, but a talent pipeline primed to fuel Oklahoma's economic future.

So, to Governor-elect Mazzei, we wish you success in office and Tulsa. Your hometown is ready to do our part in making Oklahoma the best place on the planet to raise a family.

But we need a state government who is our partner in getting it done. And we are ready to work with you to make Oklahoma strong.

The Future

As we look ahead to Tulsa's future, we must also consider our past.

Last weekend, I participated in the 40th Council Oak Tree Ceremony, commemorating the arrival of Muscogee Tribal members in 1836.

We gathered 190 years after the first Tulsans arrived on the banks of the Arkansas River.

As mayor, it is impossible not to wonder what those who arrived here all those years ago would think about us today.

Have we proven ourselves worthy of their sacrifice? Are we a reflection of the hopes and aspirations of those who came here unsure of what the future might hold?

Knowing we carry the weight of the Promise at the End of the Trail - in the last two years, we have come together to honor and partner with our sovereign Tribal nations and their citizens in an effort to be good stewards of the reservation lands of the Muscogee, Cherokee and Osage Nations - resulting in joint partnerships in public safety, economic development, health initiatives and expansion of affordable housing -

Recognizing the economic harm of the Tulsa Race Massacre still persists, we launched the Greenwood Trust. And even with intense headwinds, we have marshalled the courage to not simply acknowledge the harm caused by the Tulsa Race Massacre, but are working to repair it.

And even with economic uncertainty nationally, we have seen the revival of what made our economy great with an ever-expanding economy fueled by energy, manufacturing and aerospace - a nod to those who came here and built Tulsa into the oil capital of the world.

We are a city made up of democrats, republicans and all ideologies across the political spectrum. Citizens who draw their family lineage back to 1836 and some who are among the 102 Tulsans who just became U.S. citizens in the last year.

We don't approach problems based on blue or red, but what's best for Tulsa instead.

I was reminded of this earlier this year at a dinner with almost every living former mayor of our city. Individuals who led Tulsa through good and at times trying times.

Seven mayors - some democrats, some republicans, some born and raised here, some, like me, arrived later in life, some had even competed against each other, but what I was struck by was enduring love for this city.

It was that engagement that reinforced who we are as Tulsans.

Rather you are an 8th generation Tulsan, or got here yesterday, this is a city that not only welcomes you but is invested in your ability to thrive.

It is that mentality that is at the foundation of any great city.

- That's how we have driven down crime.
- That's how we released 820 individuals from the crippling impact of homelessness

- That's how we have produced housing, created jobs, strengthened neighborhoods and began the work of creating the pathway for young people to soar to heights that otherwise would be unavailable to them.

None of these things were done by City Hall alone.

We, Tulsans, did those things and so much more.

To those in the non-profit and faith community, private sector and philanthropy, volunteers and neighborhood leaders who have been part of this progress, thank you.

Yes, our challenges remain, but we are a city who has proved over and over again there is no challenge too big for Tulsa.

"The future is not a gift, it is an achievement", and so now is not the time to slow down or be complacent. It is time to press on the gas.

Great achievements are never fully realized individually. They are collective. And thus our future is only possible if we choose each other.

White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native, Freedman, young and old - we have to choose each other as this generation of Tulsans chasing the greatness 190 years in the making.

It will require community engagement; it will require public and private investment, but at the end of the day, the choice will be yours to make as citizens.

For years we have looked to other cities and admired their progress, but moving forward, our desire should not be to imitate others but instead be the model city for others to come to admire.

I think Tulsa is ready, I believe the time is NOW.

The work ahead will not come easy and there will be naysayers. Those who seek to politicize our road to progress - that's part of what it means to exist in a free society.

The great debate about Tulsa's future should not and must not be confined to the shallow nature of political posturing.

Instead, a true conversation about the future must be rooted in and defined by our boldness in shaping it.

History has already well documented who we were.

We exist today knowing who we are.

Now is the time to answer the question of who we are going to be ***and that future is ours to determine***.

Two hundred fifty years into the life of our nation, we are reminded that freedom and the pursuit of happiness are not achieved through passivity, they are only fully realized through courageous and collective action.

I don't know if there is a better or more noble mission than putting old divisions aside in the name of building a better Tulsa. I hope you all will join me as we continue our journey to becoming the greatest city in the country.

And I will close with this:

- We have strengthened our budgetary position by making hard choices;
- We have met our challenges head on with targeted investments and innovative partnerships;
- We have made our city safer;
- We have repaired our relationship with Indian country and taken an aggressive approach to repairing the missteps of past generations; and
- We have put our city in a position to take advantage of major opportunities on the horizon;

Two years ago, I asked you for your trust in leading this great city of ours and to hold me accountable.

I've been proud to be on this journey with all the mayor's office staff, including: the first-ever Mexican American Tulsa Deputy Mayor, Krystal Reyes. This entire team has worked to execute the priorities of this Administration and I'm proud of the work being delivered in service to our community.

And because of the sum total of our efforts as Tulsans and the work of the nearly 4,000 city employees who serve you every day, tonight, it is my pleasure to report the State of our City is as strong as it has ever been.

May God continue to bless this city we call home.

Goodnight.