

State of the City 2018

Thank you for that introduction and to all of you for being here today. I am told we've set an all-time record for attendance at this event, which I think says a lot about the excitement Tulsans are feeling for our city right now!

Being mayor of Tulsa is the most challenging, rewarding, all-consuming job I ever expect to have. And I am thankful for the love and support I receive from our family. I want to recognize several of them who are here today: my wife, Susan; the 6th generation of our family to call Tulsa home, our kids Robert and Annabel; my Mom, Suzie; and the Dean of the Former Mayors of Tulsa, still finding ways to serve this community every day at the age of 91, my grandad - Bob LaFortune.

I am so honored that we are joined today by Governor-elect Kevin Stitt and Lieutenant Governor-elect Matt Pinnell. This will be the first time in Oklahoma history that we've had a governor and lieutenant governor from Tulsa at the same time. Both of these men share my energetic passion for Tulsa's economic growth and I am so excited to work with them in advancing our city. After a hard fought campaign, these guys could be sitting on a beach somewhere but instead they are here for the State of the City address - and I think that speaks volumes about their commitment to Tulsa. Governor Stitt, Lieutenant Governor Pinnell, thank you.

While I get to give the speech today, I want to be clear that our success over the last year has been a team effort. I want to thank my partners in all we are going to talk about today: City Auditor Cathy Criswell and my colleagues on the Tulsa City Council. Councilors Vanessa Hall-Harper, Jeannie Cue, Karen O'Brien, Blake Ewing, Karen Gilbert, Connie Dodson, Arianna Moore, Phil Lakin, and Ben Kimbro are a selfless group of legislators and I am thankful for all the time and heart they put into their work on behalf of the citizens of Tulsa. I want to thank Councilor Anna America, who has found a new way to serve the citizens as our City Parks Director. And I think I can speak on behalf of all my Council colleagues when I say that we will continue the work of our late and beloved colleague, Councilor David Patrick. I feel so fortunate to have worked with an extraordinary City Council in

my first two years as mayor, and I am excited for our new colleagues who will be sworn in next month.

A year ago, I opened with a joke about Amazon. This year, thanks to the collaborative efforts between the City of Tulsa, the Tulsa Regional Chamber, and the business community Amazon is the largest new employer to come to Tulsa in the history of our city.

Crime is down, employment is up, Route 66 is coming alive again thanks to local entrepreneurs and Mother Road Market - and the greatest city park gift in American history is open. In other words, in Tulsa, the state of our city is strong.

We are living in a historic moment in Tulsa. Like a fish that does not appreciate the ocean, we can often miss the fact that we are living in historic times. So I want to explain what I mean.

Tulsa went through its first wave of transformation in the 1920s and 1930s. This is when we truly became a city. This is when we built many of the extraordinary skyscrapers of Downtown Tulsa, when we became one of the Art Deco capitals of the world. This is when we built a water line that was tapped by the President of the United States. This is when we built one of the first airports in the world, when most Americans had never seen an airplane.

The next wave of transformation came in the 1960s and 1970s. This is when we moved from being a city to being a metropolitan area. This is when we tripled the geographic footprint of the city, bringing in South Tulsa and East Tulsa. This is when we built the highway network that linked our region's cities as they never had been before. This is when we built our current airport and the Port of Catoosa and our City-County library system and the Metro Tulsa Transit Authority and INCOG. This is when John Williams decided he wasn't moving his company to Houston but instead plunked it right in the middle of Boston Avenue by constructing the tallest building in Oklahoma.

The third wave of transformation for Tulsa is occurring right now. This is when we are becoming a global city, and it is an evolution being noticed by people around the country and around the world. This is the competitive landscape for cities in the 21st Century, and Tulsa is striding across it.

Part of being globally competitive is a shift in our mindset: that we recognize our competitors around the world, but also our collaborators here at home. That's why, after a quarter century of bickering, the fight between the City and County over the jail is over. That's why we finally recognize the greatest driver of sales tax growth for the City of Tulsa is regional employment - and why we aren't fighting with the suburbs over shopping centers any more, we are working with the suburbs to be the best metropolitan area that we can be.

It also means doing away with the old, unproductive sibling rivalry between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Do you realize what Oklahoma could become if Tulsa and Oklahoma City worked together? Can you imagine our ability to recruit the best talent and businesses in the world to Tulsa if we talked more about the Thunder or Tinker Air Force Base or the health sciences infrastructure just next door in Oklahoma City? Can you imagine Oklahoma City's ability to recruit more great talent and businesses if they talked more about Gathering Place or the Port of Catoosa or the largest commercial aviation maintenance base in the world just next door in Tulsa? Well, moving forward that's exactly what we are going to do. This year marks the beginning of a new era of collaboration between Tulsa and Oklahoma City, and I am thankful my friend going on two decades now, Oklahoma City's new Mayor, David Holt, is here today as a sign of that new partnership. Mayor, would you please stand so Tulsa can show you our thanks?

To make Tulsa a globally competitive city, we have work to do ourselves - to make our city the best version of Tulsa it can be. To do this, we are focusing on three primary areas:

First, we have to be a safe city. If Tulsa isn't a safe city, people won't stay here and they certainly won't move here.

Every member of our team at the City plays a part in making Tulsa safer. Whether it is making sure your water is clean, or the ice is cleared off your streets, or the stoplights work, or the finances that support what we do are sound, or people reporting concerns can do so with reliable customer care – everyone plays a part.

But the reality is that when I was sworn in as mayor we didn't even have enough police officers to fill every beat. In that year, we broke Tulsa's all-time homicide record.

So we have pursued making Tulsa safer on three main tracks.

First, the City Council and I have funded in consecutive years the two largest expansions of Police hiring in Tulsa history - 90 new officers funded two years in a row. To put this in context, in this century the City has averaged 30 new officers per year. So we have basically funded 6 years worth of hiring over the last 2 years. And we will maintain our commitment to this path until we reach the patrol officer count that independent experts have told us we need to make Tulsa as safe as it should be.

Second, the Tulsa Commission on Community Policing - a group of citizens, police, and elected officials - developed a 77-point strategic plan to implement the most ambitious community policing program in the nation and we have made substantial progress over the last year in implementing it. Community policing aims to build relationships between officers and the community so that everyday citizens are empowered to help make Tulsa safer. As a result of this work, today every patrol officer wears a body camera, citizen advisory boards have been established in every division and at headquarters, training and officer wellness programs have been improved, and collaboration with local schools has been expanded. We have a long way to go before this program is fully matured, but I am thankful for the support we've received from across the city in its implementation.

Third, we aren't just focusing more resources around public safety, we are also being smarter about how we do the work. The number one municipal arrest we make each year is public intoxication. These are generally either people who made a one-time mistake or who have a serious drug or alcohol problem. Yet for all of history, we threw them in jail where they received no treatment and all too often picked them up again in a few weeks or months to put them in jail all over again. No longer. This year we opened the Tulsa Sobering Center, a partnership with 12&12 which serves as an alternative to incarceration. People who are picked up for public intoxication are given the option of jail time or they can go to the Sobering Center, where they sleep it off for 12 hours, are offered treatment, if they accept it they get it and if they don't they are put in a cab and taken back where they were picked up. In the last month alone, we had over 80 people who would otherwise have gone to jail instead be picked up by Police and 15 minutes later were in the care of a certified treatment center.

We are also one of the first cities in America to test a panhandling reduction program we call A Better Way. In this program, the City partners with the Mental Health Association of Oklahoma and sends a van out in the mornings to find people panhandling around the city. The driver offers them an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, and our experience is that - unless they are intoxicated or physically incapacitated - panhandlers almost always prefer to work. They work for the day on a crew picking up trash and cleaning public spaces, but the most important part occurs at lunch where they are interviewed by social service agencies who can help them get back on their feet. The Tulsa Area United Way has provided a job counselor who helps them find work.

This program has broad importance for the country, because in our first 6 months of operation we saw results in Tulsa that closely mirror those in Albuquerque - the first city to try this program. We believe this may demonstrate the success of the program can be replicated regardless of the city, which has profound importance for the way cities around America deal with panhandling. I am proud of Tulsa for being a true laboratory of democracy.

We call it A Better Way because it is such a better means of assisting our neighbors in need rather than handing money to someone on the street. With this program, you know it will go toward helping them get back on their feet. If you would like to join the City of Tulsa in supporting this program, all you have to do is text ABW to 898211, and you will be directed to the Community Service Council's website to help.

All of these local efforts, combined with incredible support from state and federal agencies, have our homicide rate down more than 30% year over year.

Now, I want to be clear that while the City Council and I are doing our best to make Tulsa safer, we aren't the ones responding to 9-1-1 calls for help. That responsibility falls on the men and women of the Tulsa Police Department. I am so proud of the sacrifice and service they deliver for the citizens of Tulsa. Our time today is limited, so I want to give you just one example from the last year.

On the afternoon of July 3, most of us at the City were marking time before the 4th of July holiday. But Tulsa Police officers had encountered a suspect at the QuikTrip at 49th and Harvard who refused to get out of a van and would not identify himself. Showing remarkable calm and restraint, officers spent almost a quarter of an hour talking with him, asking him to get out of the van but he wouldn't do it. So they called Sergeant Mike Parsons to the scene for deployment of a pepperball gun. Sergeant Parsons calmly explained to the suspect what was going to happen, but still the suspect refused to move. So Sergeant Parsons deployed a pepperball, and as he did so the suspect opened fire on the officers. Sergeant Parsons was struck in the leg near his femoral artery, a potentially lethal wound.

And this is where the remarkable heroism of the Tulsa Police reveals itself. You can watch all of this on the body camera footage subsequently released. Officers take cover and ask Sergeant Parsons if they can take him to the hospital. Remarkably, he not only declines to go to the hospital but instead calls two officers over so he can lean on them for support as he directs the tactical

response. He instructs younger officers to calm themselves, and officers move in to stabilize the suspect.

Officers begin providing first aid to the suspect who just moments ago had been shooting at them. And a few minutes later, the body camera footage finds Sergeant Parsons sitting on the bumper of an ambulance. A medic approaches to give him first aid, but Sergeant Parsons directs them to first assist the suspect who had just shot him.

All of this is a testament to the kind of men and women serving you in the Tulsa Police Department. But there is an element of the miraculous in it too. You see, just that morning Sergeant Parsons had been given a challenge coin which he placed in his pocket. The bullet which could have killed him instead struck the challenge coin, injuring his leg but preventing the bullet from passing through and striking an artery.

For the rest of my life, I will never forget the moment when I was standing beside Sergeant Parsons in the emergency room at Saint Francis Hospital and found out this happened. Everything else fell away in my mind and only three words remained: Thank you God. Sergeant Parsons is here today on behalf of all the men and women who serve you in the Tulsa Police Department, and I would ask that he please stand so we can give them our thanks.

The second area in which we are focused on making Tulsa a globally-competitive city is in making Tulsa a city of opportunity for everyone. Historically, Tulsa has been a beacon of opportunity. That's what brought my family - the Bynums in the 1880s and the LaFortunes in the 1920s - to Tulsa. Tulsa is a city filled with stories like this: people who sought opportunity here, found it, and gave back to the community. But we have to acknowledge that not all people have equal opportunity in Tulsa - historically or today. To change that, we are pursuing three paths: Resilient Tulsa, the New Tulsans Initiative, and the Mayor's Initiative for Women in Leadership.

First, this year we launched the Resilient Tulsa strategy - the first comprehensive plan to address the great moral issue of our time in Tulsa: racial disparity. When Tulsa kids are robbed of 11 years of life just because they live in one part of town versus another, all Tulsans have a responsibility to help. Resilient Tulsa is the vehicle by which all Tulsans can. The strategy contains over 40 action items that will be implemented over the next 5 years – things like encouraging small business development in minority communities, developing neighborhood action plans, and partnering with local educational institutions to address specific industry skills gaps. Just last night, over 250 Tulsans gathered across the city in groups of 7-8 people they did not know to have dinner together and discuss their life experiences in Tulsa. For me, participation in one of these dinners was an incredibly powerful experience. There is just something about sitting down over a meal with your neighbors and hearing the good and the bad of our lives in this one place. Ultimately, reconciliation in Tulsa will occur at that person to person level. Keeping all of this on track is the new Mayor's Office of Resilience and Equity. Leading that team is DeVon Douglass. We need your help in this historic effort to address inequality in Tulsa! If you want to learn more about how you can join us, just Google "Resilient Tulsa" or you can reach out to DeVon directly.

Second, this year we also launched the New Tulsans Strategy. When we think about what made America such a special place since its inception, it isn't that the 13 original colonies declared their independence and then denied access to anyone else - it is that America became a beacon of freedom and opportunity for people from all nations, which allowed us to attract the best and the brightest from around the world. Yet today when Americans talk about immigration, we almost always fall into the divisive trap of a debate around illegal immigration. One of the most moving experiences for me as mayor has been to attend citizenship ceremonies. To see our newest fellow Americans, who have worked so hard and taken great risks for years just for the chance to be an American, to see them take that oath and swear their allegiance to our country just fills your heart with gratitude to be an American. For those people, those new Americans, we want Tulsa to be a welcoming place - a place where they can get good jobs, where their families can receive a good education, where they are invited into the

civic life and leadership of our city. That is what the New Tulsans Initiative is all about. Leading this initiative is Christina da Silva, our Director of Community Development & Policy at the City of Tulsa. We need your help in making Tulsa a more welcoming place for our immigrant community! If you want to learn more about how you can join us, just Google “New Tulsans” or you can reach out to Christina directly.

The third initiative we’ve launched this year to make Tulsa a place of opportunity for all people is the Mayor’s Initiative for Women in Leadership. When I came in as mayor, we had one woman serving on City authorities and boards for every two men. So we have gone to work in addressing that imbalance in the belief that gender equity in leadership roles produces better results for everyone. We have worked to appoint more women to City authorities and boards. The City is undergoing a pay equity audit, and we are bringing forward a new City policy that will cause City jobs to be routinely compared to ensure pay equity. But most importantly for the future, we believe there are remarkable future women leaders in Tulsa and we want to empower them to do more for our city. Leading this effort are members of the Mayors Commission on the Status of Women and Amy Brown, my Deputy Chief of Staff. We know the City of Tulsa isn’t the only organization in town with these disparities. We need your help in addressing them in all parts of our city. If you want to learn more about how you can join us, you can reach out to Amy directly.

I’m honored to work alongside a new generation of women in leadership who are driving these improvements at the City of Tulsa. DeVon, Christina, and Amy are just three of them – and you’re going to be hearing about them for a long time.

The third step in becoming a globally competitive city is perhaps the most tangible, and it regards our built environment: we are building the city that this generation of Tulsans wants to leave to the next. Most people around the world in 2018 live in cities that they hope someone built with them in mind. Maybe they found a job there they like, or they enjoy particular aspects of it. But they don’t

get to play a part in creating it. In Tulsa, we are building the city we want for us and for those who come after us.

This is happening across all three sectors: philanthropic, public, and private.

The philanthropic sector is doing so many great things, but the great point of pride for our city in the last year is obviously Gathering Place. We shouldn't be surprised by the breakdown in public discourse afflicting our country right now. It has never been easier for humans to be isolated from one another, and the institutions which brought us together historically are declining in attendance. We can either accept this as inevitable and watch kindness, compassion, and empathy slowly erode - or we can create new ways of bringing people together. That's what Gathering Place is all about. But the thing I love most about it is the look on the face of Tulsa kids when I tell them it is the best city park in the world – and it was built for them. Imagine what this generation of Tulsa kids will do in our city during their lifetimes with that level of expectation established in their minds. I can't wait to see what they do.

In the public sector, the citizens of Tulsa are holding their own. The next few years will see a lake constructed in the Arkansas River - 3 miles in length, 8 feet deep on average - that will change the way Tulsans relate to the Arkansas River. This summer we will be one of the first 12 cities in the United States to operate bus rapid transit lines. We are bringing USA BMX's Olympic Training and Trials Facility to the Greenwood District. We are working with the foremost museum experts in the world to renovate Gilcrease Museum to a facility worthy of the greatest collection of American art and history not owned by the federal government. I've just mentioned 4 projects, but we have two dozen similar ones under way as we build the Tulsa we want.

The area I may be most excited about in 2018, however, is the private sector investment that is occurring in Tulsa. And before I touch on a few details, I want to pause and thank the Tulsa Regional Chamber. As you're about to hear, we've

established a working dynamic between the Chamber and the City that is producing unprecedented results.

I also want to thank our City's Chief of Economic Development, Kian Kamas. It is easy to overlook local talent, so I want to be crystal clear: Kian Kamas is the best economic development chief of any city in America. No city's economic development chief can claim to have accomplished more in 2018 with the resources available to them. Kian, thank you.

Please take note: Yet another remarkable woman leader at the City of Tulsa.

But here's the results: In 2018, we landed the two largest new employers to ever come to Tulsa in the history of our city. Combined, these two alone are investing hundreds of millions of dollars into their campuses in North Tulsa and will employ thousands of people.

We are excited to welcome Amazon to Tulsa, and we believe this is only the start of developing a strong working relationship with one of the world's most innovative companies.

We are also excited to welcome Greenheck Group to Tulsa, and think the match between their corporate culture of treating employees right and giving back to the community matches perfectly with our city.

But while these two companies are historic wins for Tulsa, they are representative of a broader trend. The U.S. Comptroller of the Currency issued a study in September showing that, year over year, Tulsa outpaced not just Oklahoma but the United States as a whole in job growth!

And in Downtown Tulsa alone, we have over \$300 million in projects slated to break ground over the next 12 months. Investment in Downtown Tulsa continues to grow at an unprecedented pace.

So, the state of our city is strong. You can feel the positive momentum, but we can see it in the data as well.

But we're not resting on our laurels. The mantra I raise with our team at the City over and over and over again is: "Continuous Improvement". We need to be working every day to be better than we were the day before. I want to share three important initiatives we will carry out in the year ahead.

Our first initiative for 2019 concerns our City infrastructure. In the last year, we convened a commission of business leaders who reviewed the way we fix streets and recommended a number of improvements. Chief among them was that over 60% of the project time on a street project isn't for the street work - it is for the utility work underneath the street. Gas lines, water lines, sewer lines, power and cable and telephone - you name the utility, and we have it under or along a street somewhere in Tulsa. These improvements have to be done with care and usually independent of one another. Staying on top of the scheduling for all that work takes a tremendous amount of logistical stewardship, yet we found we only had one guy overseeing this work for every street project under way in the entire City.

So the Council and I funded the recommended number of staff for utility coordination. We've improved the bid process to help make our projects more competitive. We cut bureaucratic red tape to help expedite and complete projects on time and under budget. We believe this will make a big difference in speeding the pace of street projects

I say all of that to butter you up before I ask for more money.

In 2019, the Council and I will present to voters a renewal of the Improve Our Tulsa program. This is not a program for dreamers and visionaries. This is the City's basic infrastructure program. The vast majority of it will be for street work. While the City has made great progress on catching up with a decades-in-the-making street maintenance backlog, the reality is that our streets are still a long way from being something we can be proud of. We can not let up on the pace of

work. But we also just spent a summer with our firefighters working out of trucks with no air conditioning. We came dangerously close in the last year to not having any operating ladder trucks for the Tulsa Fire Department. Our Tulsa police officers are driving cars that are so run down they can't be fixed fast enough. Our salt spreader trucks for winter storms are on life support. And I haven't even mentioned the parks buildings with leaky roofs or other run-down buildings. So the renewal of Improve Our Tulsa will not be about building new, shiny things. It will be about fixing streets, taking better care of our physical facilities, and making sure our first responders have operable vehicles so they can protect the citizens of Tulsa.

Our second big objective in 2019 relates to education. We will continue to stand with our teachers in seeking better pay, and I will continue to advocate for local funding options that allow local communities to help. My hope is that our new state leaders prioritize the improvement of education in Oklahoma. In Tulsa, we stand ready to work with them in that cause. But I also recognize we need to be working on the things we can control locally. In 2019, I will convene local education leaders, area elected officials, and our fellow citizens for a community dialogue exploring all local options for enhancing educational opportunity for Tulsans – regardless of the part of town they live in or the school they attend. From this dialogue, we will develop a plan that allows Tulsans to quit sitting as hostages to fortune, hoping the state will act in our best interest. We must find a way to put ourselves in a position to act – and to establish the best educational system we can, from pre-K through higher ed.

The third significant initiative for 2019 relates to our ability to continue bringing investment into Tulsa. For years, Tulsa has had a bad reputation for red tape and a glacial pace in processing development permits. This isn't the fault of the people who work in our Development Services Department. The folks at Amazon told me our permitting team was one of the best they had worked with. When we have enough people focused on a permit, the work is excellent. The problem is that isn't usually the case. Our permitting operation at the City has suffered for years from chronic understaffing, and understaffing in this space means longer

wait times for those who are trying to invest in our city. When my team began to work on this problem we found that the average wait for a permit application to be reviewed for the first time was 25 working days - that's 5 weeks.

So this year, we rolled up our sleeves and went to work on overhauling permitting at the City of Tulsa. We put our permitting system online after years of industry requesting it. We took the dramatic step of merging the City's long-term planning function into INCOG, streamlining operations and providing a one-stop shop for planning and zoning. We established an independent Development Services Department, tasked with moving us from laggard to leader amongst our competitor cities when it comes to permitting projects. Through a lot of hard work and analysis of best practices around the country, we have developed a plan that hires the correct number of plan reviewers – a staffing increase of 83%. Our plan allows the Department to contract with third party plan reviewers when needed, it includes a self-certification program and offers a better system for expediting plans as needed.

We will implement this overhaul in the first half of 2019, and it will shift our average response time for initial building plan reviews from 5 weeks to 5 days.

In closing, I hope you share my excitement for the trajectory Tulsa is on right now. But as we conclude yet another divisive election cycle, I also want to ask you to consider the broad coalition of Tulsans who are moving our city forward. Are they just Republicans? Are they just Democrats? Of course not! They are our neighbors, our friends, our family – they are our fellow Tulsans. Tulsa is that rare and special place willing to openly acknowledge our greatest challenges, and then set aside partisanship to work together in making this the best city it can be. We will let others fritter away opportunity over partisan gamesmanship. In Tulsa, people still matter more than partisanship.

If you can't tell, I love being mayor of this city! Thank you for being the people who are making Tulsa the best city it can be. Let's keep working together, keep

blazing trails, and keep advancing this community on behalf of the people we love.

Thank you.