

## 2019 SOTC – San Francisco, CA

Thank you all for coming.

Thank you to the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus for opening up their new home for us today— this amazing National LGBTQ Center for the Arts. What I love about this new center is that the Chorus has invested their time and resources creating something beautiful, not just for themselves, but for the entire LGBTQ and arts communities around the country.

This is a place that celebrates the best of San Francisco, and that is what I want to talk about today.

For too long now, our city has been the subject of a drumbeat of negative media attention, national stories claiming San Francisco has lost its way. How our streets are dangerous slums, our housing unobtainable, how tech workers and locals battle for our City's soul.

Like most convenient narratives, there are elements of truth here. We have failed to build enough housing. We do face a homelessness crisis. And we grapple with mental health and substance use on our streets.

Of course, we acknowledge the challenges we face. The question is: what do we do next? Hang our head...and give up? Concede our problems are too great-- and the soul of our city lost?

Anyone who thinks that's what we will do knows nothing about this city. This is San Francisco. We don't throw up our hands. We take to our feet. We don't wait for guidance. We light the way.

This is the City that Knows How. The innovation capital of the world, the national leader on LGBT and immigrant rights, environmental protection, healthcare, and so many other causes, the place where Maya Angelou rang cable car bells, and a girl went from public housing to the Mayor's office.

Our Congresswoman is Speaker of the House. Our former Mayor just became governor. Another is California's senior senator. The state's Lieutenant Governor, Controller, and Treasurer are all San Franciscans. And our former District Attorney, Kamala Harris, could even be the next President.

It is time this city hold its head high again. It's time we believe again.

Yes, we have our challenges, and I see them every day. Just like you. I am frustrated by them every day. Just like you are. But I am also motivated. Because there is no problem we can't solve together. There is no challenge we won't face together.

There is, as President Clinton said, nothing wrong with San Francisco that can't be fixed by what's right with San Francisco.

Homelessness in San Francisco has, for decades, been described as a sad reality. An impossible problem. Just part of our City.

I don't accept that. Just a few years ago, you only had to walk a few blocks from City Hall to see tent encampments lining our sidewalks, covering whole blocks on Division Street. Today those large encampments are gone. That's partly because we have been working to build more shelters, more housing, and help more people.

In the last six months since I've been in office, we have built three navigation centers, with 338 beds – the fastest expansion of shelter beds our City has seen in decades. And we have helped nearly 1,000 people exit homelessness.

Yes, we have a long way to go and so much work to do, but we are making a difference in people's lives.

When we opened the Bryant Street Navigation Center earlier this month, I met a woman who had just moved in. She is battling addiction, and breast cancer. On the streets, her medication kept getting stolen. She couldn't get healthy. Now she's inside, and working towards getting housing. At Bryant Street, she gave me a hug and said she's hopeful, and so am I. If she has hope, others can, too. That is a difference.

I've already announced my plan to add 1,000 shelter beds by 2020, enough to clear the shelter bed waitlist. We also are declaring a shelter crisis so we can get these shelter beds built now.

And I want to thank Supervisors Brown, Haney, Mandelman, Stefani and Walton for joining me in recognizing our bureaucracy shouldn't stand in the way of a single one of these 1,000 beds.

This is a huge step, but it isn't enough. We know we have around 4,000 unsheltered people in our city, sleeping on the streets, in parks, doorways, or vehicles. We know that is a travesty – but it's one we can take on.

In the next four years, I want to create enough shelter beds, step-up housing units, homeless housing units and housing subsidies for every person who is currently unsheltered. That's 4,000 more placements for people. No more excuses. No more status quo. And let's be clear -- every part of our city, every neighborhood must be open to being part of the solution.

To get there, we must move forward my proposal for our windfall funding: \$185 million for homelessness, behavioral health, and affordable housing.

With this investment we can add: 310 new shelter beds, 300 units of housing by master-leasing units, freeing up hundreds of beds in our shelter system, complete funding for a 255-unit building for homeless seniors and adults, and get started on hundreds more units.

Now I know there are other budget priorities. And they are important. But let's be clear -- every dollar we take away from what I've proposed is one fewer bed. One lost home. One more person on the street. I will continue to work with Board President Norman Yee, and the Board of Supervisors on how to best use this funding, and to address homelessness in our City.

It won't be easy, but working together we can tackle any impossible problem.

Yet the crisis on our streets is not just about homelessness. The people injecting drugs, the people suffering from mental illness, they need more than housing. Often they are actually housed.

These people need help. Since I took office, we have added over 50 mental health stabilization beds, and I am committed to opening 100 more this year. Our Healthy Streets Operations Center is out every day helping those suffering from substance use disorder by getting them connected to treatment and shelter.

To help those who are truly suffering get real treatment, I've partnered with Supervisor Mandelman on conservatorship legislation. Because when people can't care for themselves, we need to care for them.

And we need to revamp our entire approach to mental health. To bring together all of our mental health programs under one focus, I am creating a Director of Mental Health Reform who will better coordinate mental health care for those suffering in our City, strengthen the programs we have that are working, and, yes, cut the ineffective programs - because clearly some things just aren't working

We need to build up people's lives, not shuffle them from emergency room to emergency room, from jail cell to jail cell. Our criminal justice system is not a mental health solution. To do all this, we need vision and leadership.

And today, I am announcing that I have hired a new Director of the Department of Public Health: Dr. Grant Colfax. Dr. Colfax is one of our own. Trained at UCSF, he worked at the Department of Public Health as the Director of HIV Prevention and Research, before leaving to join the Obama White House as the Director of National AIDS Policy. He knows our City and its challenges, and he is ready to get to work.

And he knows that we need to get to zero HIV infections in San Francisco. We need to reach our most vulnerable populations, particularly our African-American and Latino communities who are not seeing their HIV infection rates drop as others do. This means getting everyone -- and I mean everyone -- access to services, treatment, and preventative medication like PrEP.

And I know that Dr. Colfax will get us to that goal.

We're also confronting San Francisco's other allegedly impossible problem—housing. We have to produce and preserve housing, and keep people in their homes. I will continue to support the Right to Civil Counsel, which we funded with \$5.8 million in our most recent budget, so every tenant who needs a lawyer can get one.

And through our small sites program, we will keep fighting to preserve rent-controlled buildings to keep people in our neighborhoods secure. People like Ms. Wu, a 99 year-old woman who has been living in the same building in the Richmond for 30 years. Her building was going up for sale, threatening her home and that of every senior who lived there. I met her when Supervisor Fewer and I visited her home after we helped purchase the building and make it permanently affordable, ensuring Ms. Wu and her neighbors wouldn't have to worry about where they were going to live.

And as we keep people in their homes, we need to build more new housing. Lots more. In 2018, the City built around 3,000 homes. That's not nearly enough. We have to get better.

That's why I have already hired a Housing Delivery Director to deliver projects faster, and implement policy reforms that cut the time it takes to permit housing in half. I have directed our departments to end the backlog of hundreds of in-law units and make it easier for people to build them going forward. And passed legislation to prevent the loss of thousands of units in the pipeline.

If we are going to be a San Francisco for all, we need to be a San Francisco that builds housing for all. That's why we are moving forward with a \$300 million Affordable Housing Bond so we can continue investing in badly-needed affordable housing. Across our City, we have projects like the Balboa Upper Yards project in Supervisor Safai's district, that are ready to be built. That's 131 units that just need the funding.

But it is not just about investing. We have to break the barriers to building housing so our dollars go further and we get housing faster.

Today I'm announcing a Charter Amendment for the November election to make all affordable housing and teacher housing as-of-right in San Francisco. If an affordable housing or teacher housing project is proposed within zoning, then build it. And build it now. No more bureaucracy. No more costly appeals. No more not in my neighborhood. It's simple: Affordable housing as-of-right because housing affordability is a right.

More funding, less bureaucracy. This is how we create housing for all San Franciscans.

And I will continue working with our state legislators, regional partners, and new governor—because housing affordability isn't just a San Francisco issue. It is a Bay Area and California crisis.

We won't always see the results of these efforts immediately— it may take years to see changes.

But then, if we had started building more aggressively twenty years ago, we wouldn't be in this situation today. We might have inherited a problem decades in the making, but we cannot be the ones who pass it on to the next generation.

And as we grow, we must make our streets clean and our communities safe. Since my first day in office, I've been out walking our neighborhoods. Drug use, psychosis, and human feces on our streets is not ok. It's not healthy. And while there's much more to do, we are working every day to stop it.

It's no secret I've put a lot of focus on the Tenderloin and South of Market. I am committed to improving these neighborhoods

So far, we have doubled the number of beat officers in mid-Market, added Pit Stops, Big Belly trash cans, and more street cleaners, increased enforcement against drug dealers, and expanded outreach by our Healthy Streets Operations Center.

I know we have more to do, but people are starting to see a difference. Families are coming to the new playgrounds at Civic Center. I met a young family with two small children who came down from the Sunset. They told me just a year ago they never would have gone to the playground there. Too dirty, too rundown, too many needles. Now, the playgrounds and the new café are a part of their Saturday. This is a start. A first step toward making all our public spaces clean and safe.

We have also seen our investments in community policing yield results. Last year, we had an 18% drop in homicides, which coincided with a major reduction in gun violence for the second year in a row. In fact, we had a 25% increase in firearms seized and a 35% decrease in gun violence.

To put it simply: more guns off the streets, fewer crimes and homicides involving guns. We also had a 9% reduction in property crimes, including an 18% drop in car break-ins and a 13% drop in car thefts. We are, at last, reversing the car break-in epidemic. Through the great work of our Police Department, we are making a difference on violent crimes and property crimes. More officers in our neighborhoods and investments in cleaner, safer streets are important.

But as we address these issues today, we also have to think about how to prevent them from happening tomorrow. We have to confront the root causes of crime and addiction.

Which means addressing inequality and poverty.

Last year, working with Public Defender Jeff Adachi and Treasurer Jose Cisneros, we made San Francisco the first City in the country to eliminate punitive, wasteful court fines and fees, and that did nothing more than drive people into poverty or, worse, back into prison.

And we will continue our work to give the next generation opportunities and prevent them from ending up in the criminal justice system in the first place. We are growing our CityBuild program to address our shortage of construction workers, and get people good paying jobs. And we are launching our CityDrive program to train new Muni drivers, and help us get more buses and trains on the street so San Franciscans can get where they need to go faster. We have TechSF, Healthcare Academy, and Hospitality Initiative – all of which train people to work in our City.

And as a former City intern myself—who at 14 proudly worked at a non-profit answering phones, doing paperwork, and helping young families, I am particularly proud to have launched Opportunities for All, so we can get every high school student in San Francisco a paid internship. Because unlike the President, in this town we pay people when they go to work.

This program will help our kids now – to earn money, to learn new skills, and to keep them from going down the wrong path. These young people will be exposed to opportunities they never knew existed. They could see a future in an industry they never had access to. They could see themselves making a difference in the world in a way they never thought possible.

They will flourish, and we will grow a workforce right here in our city. And San Francisco will continue to lead on so many other issues. We will protect the environment and fight climate change

Yesterday, PG&E declared bankruptcy. There's a lot of talk about what this could mean, but let's talk about what we know: San Francisco knows how to run a clean power system. And we are going to get to 100% renewable energy by 2030. And if this bankruptcy provides an opportunity for public power, we will take it.

I will be working with City Attorney Dennis Herrera to make sure that whatever happens with PG&E, that we are prepared.

I am also working with City Attorney Herrera to address questions around the testing at the Hunters Point Shipyard Project. We need to be clear and transparent with the public about this project. Along with Supervisor Walton, we have requested that UCSF and UC Berkeley put together an independent team to review the procedures for the

retesting of Parcels A and G. These are trusted institutions. That will provide an independent analysis. So the public can feel confident in the results.

We also have to break the gridlock on our streets and create a more functioning, safe transportation system. People may continue to choose to drive in San Francisco, but driving can't be the only choice. I will work with Supervisor Peskin on a measure that will charge our ride-hail companies to relieve congestion on our streets.

We have to keep pushing forward street safety and Vision Zero projects, including building protected bike lanes on our high-injury corridors. Like the one we are building right outside here on Valencia Street

We will also continue investing in helping our transgender residents with housing and services. And to those in Washington D.C. who continue trying to erase transgender people, it won't work. Not here in San Francisco.

And now more than ever, as the President continues to fear monger about walls and slander our immigrant communities, San Francisco is proud to stand as a Sanctuary City. We are a city surrounded by bridges, not one divided by walls.

When I took the oath of office six months ago, I never pretended I could solve all our problems.

I believed we could solve them together. I believed in a government for all of us.

And I still believe. We are working to turn the tide, and I hope every San Franciscan can feel the difference.

When you see our Public Works crews out power-washing the sidewalks and picking up trash, I hope you feel the difference.

When you see our police officers walking beats in the neighborhood and talking to merchants and residents, I hope you feel the difference.

When you see our Homeless Outreach Team and public health workers helping people suffering on the streets, I hope you feel the difference.

When you see a new shelter open, a new affordable housing project go up, or a new bike lane finished, I hope you smile and feel the difference.

I hope you believe with me. That you hold your head high and take pride in our city and what we can do together. Because we are San Francisco! We will meet our challenges. We will light the way.