

2019 SOTC – OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

Thank you, Percy. It's going to be fun to work with you and your board the next two years, and I want to also mention the pleasure it has been to partner with Chair Rhonda Hooper the first nine months of my time as Mayor. And my gratitude to Roy Williams and all the staff at the Chamber who made today's event possible.

It is my great honor to stand before you all and deliver my first State of the City address. The State of the City, which didn't even exist 25 years ago, has really grown into a special opportunity for our community to come together and consider important issues. And this year everyone in the city is able to join us live for the first time through Facebook. So my greetings to everyone here with me today, and to those watching now or in the future on Facebook Live. To the person watching this video next Tuesday night at 11 p.m. in your flannel pajamas, I see you. And I salute you.

Twenty-five years ago last month, the voters of Oklahoma City made the now-legendary commitment to the first MAPS, our city's groundbreaking initiative to improve our quality of life. On that December day, we decided to invest in ourselves, to meet challenges and seize opportunities, and nothing has ever been the same.

In 1993, your Mayor was a freshman in high school in Northwest Oklahoma City. Your new City Manager Craig Freeman was just a year into his career at the city, a 29-year-old junior-level budget analyst, just happy to have a job in public service. Your newest City Councilmember Nikki Nice was a 13-year-old at Millwood Middle School.

A generation of leaders stepped-up in 1993 and sparked a renaissance that has now lasted for two decades. They said at the time they were building a city that their kids and their grandkids would want to call home, because a city without young people is a city without a future. And their work did in fact inspire a younger generation to do just that. Because of visionary leadership, a new generation stayed right here in Oklahoma City. The MAPS Generation. And I'm part of it. We chose Oklahoma City because of the investments in quality of life that this city made. And now Rachel and I are raising our kids here, just as you are. Here they are, by the way - Rachel, George and Maggie, why don't you guys stand up.

The journey of a city never ends. One group of people merely carries the torch as far as they can, and then they hand it to the next generation. Slowly, but steadily, the MAPS Generation is taking that torch. Not too fast, for we still have wisdom to glean. But not too slow, because this is as it was designed. But in any case, we take that torch recognizing that we have an obligation. We have an obligation to do just what was done for us. To leave this city a better place than we found it, for our kids and grandkids, for George and Maggie, and all the children of Oklahoma City.

I took office in April of last year, with that charge – placed upon me by the voters of this great city. Today, let's talk about what we will do together to continue this city's renaissance, fulfill our obligations to those who did so much for us, and our obligations to those who depend on our renewed commitment. And let's talk about what we will do together to ensure that the opportunity and optimism of this renaissance reaches every resident of this city.

When I ran for this office, I focused on a handful of priorities. Those include core services – streets, transit, infrastructure, police and fire protection. Also, quality of life, which we have found leads to job growth - the centerpiece of that effort being our aforementioned MAPS investments. Also, the need for a renewed vision for public education in our city. And finally, incorporating the diversity of our city into our decision-making. These priorities are the framework through which I'll speak today. Let's begin with core services.

Your city government plays many roles, but it always starts with the daily services you depend on. I have served at every level of government, and I love this level the most because it's the one that really affects your daily life. You use a city service almost every minute of the day. Turn on your water, drive on your neighborhood street, leave your trash at the curb, call 9-1-1, visit a park or our Zoo, ride on a bus, adopt a pet, build a new business – do any of these things and you are interacting with your city government. What happens here is not a reality show like so much of politics. It is real life.

The good news is, thanks to some of the finest elected leaders in the nation – Mayor Mick Cornett and his predecessors and a great City Council, working with absolutely the finest city staff in the nation, and a political culture that has prioritized unity, civility and pragmatism, our city services are, for the most part, meeting your expectations and then some. How do we know? We ask you. Every year, our city conducts a scientific survey of our citizens, and the results have been consistent for a decade. You are the most satisfied customers in the nation. Almost across the board, you rank our city services very high, higher than other citizens in other cities rank theirs. And listen to this, as a place to live, 82 percent of our citizens say Oklahoma City is good or excellent. That is 28 percentage points higher than the national average for a large city. Twenty-eight points. The national average is 54 and we're at 82. Do you know how powerful that is when I'm pitching Oklahoma City to job creators? That I can say the people who live here love living here more than the people in any other large city?

Now what are the people of Oklahoma City less than thrilled about? Say it with me - streets. No matter what I post on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, someone will respond, "Yeah, but when are ya gonna fix the streets?" But here is the good news. Thanks to a vote you took in September of 2017, we are fixing the streets.

Let me back up and give you just a little background on street funding in Oklahoma City. Streets are a perennial complaint, and you deserve to know why, because it really isn't a mystery.

At over 620 square miles, Oklahoma City is one of the five largest cities in the United States by land mass. Let me put that into perspective for you. The land mass of Manhattan, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Miami and Chicago combined adds up to 609 square miles. Let me repeat, six major American cities could fit within OKC. Take one of those cities – Boston. Within its city limits, Boston actually has about the same population as Oklahoma City. We're at about 650,000 and Boston is about 685,000. We spread that out over 620 square miles and they have 89 square miles. Put another way, we have to build infrastructure – streets, transit, police and fire protection, water and sewer pipes – across an area seven times larger using the same number of taxpayers. In OKC, we use property taxes to fund our street infrastructure because Oklahoma is the only state in the union that restricts property tax use for cities to only infrastructure, not operations. And of course, we have a culture in Oklahoma that has generally preferred lower property taxes than other states. So, put all that into a formula. Enormous city limits, low property taxes, property taxes are what we use to fund street repairs. This isn't rocket science. It all adds up to the reality that our streets are going to fall below your expectations.

But in 2017 the Mayor and Council at the time came up with a workaround. They decided to supplement the traditional revenue stream for street repairs – property tax – with a temporary sales tax. One penny for two years and three months. Combined, the two funding methods would essentially double annual street dollars from \$100 million to \$200 million, for a grand total of almost \$800 million going into street repairs. That's as large as MAPS 3. They called it "Better Streets, Safer City," and you the voters approved it in 2017. And that work is happening right now. It is the largest street repair initiative in the city's history, and it will ultimately lead to hundreds of projects across the city. Which will then cause you to complain about the construction. But orange is the official color of progress and I'm excited that the city has undertaken this endeavor. But I find a lot of

people don't know about it yet, so now you do, and you can be an ambassador for this major street repair initiative. This is an important issue to the people of Oklahoma City, and people need to hear about it. Tell the story. And go to okc.gov/bettersafer to learn more and see a list of all the projects so far. They're all over the city - Northeast, South, Northwest. Keep in mind, our Council, our citizen advisory board, and our staff still have funds to allocate to projects yet to be finalized, so feel free to make your voice heard.

That same vote in 2017 also addressed some major public safety needs, another key element of successfully delivering core services. On that same day, the voters of OKC approved a permanent sales tax largely dedicated to police and fire, most notably the addition of over 120 new police officers, so that we could keep up with population growth and development, response times could improve, officers could reliably count on back-up, and our officers would have the time to do community policing and really build relationships with their communities. Our citizens, our Mayor and Council, our business leaders, our police and fire departments, and our police and fire unions all moved as one and got the funding approved. It will take time to implement, but I've already attended two police graduations in the nine months I've been in office, so the work is underway.

Another core service making progress every day is transit. Transit faces the same challenges of sprawl I mentioned earlier. And for a long time it was not a service we were proud of. But a decade ago, you could sense that this community's commitment to transit was changing, and work began around that time that has really paid off in just the last few months. This past year was the biggest year for transit in Oklahoma City in half a century.

Let me take you back to 2005. That is when our community debuted the Fixed Guideway Study, a comprehensive plan for transit. Its major elements were better bus service, commuter rail connecting our metro cities, bus rapid transit, and a downtown streetcar to circulate people once all of those other methods deposited them downtown.

Now go down that list. Next week, our city will begin Sunday bus service, fulfilling a long-term dream to offer bus service seven days a week. Last month, our city opened the downtown streetcar, a MAPS 3 project that has been received with enormous positivity. Just yesterday we welcomed our 100,000th rider, a remarkable feat in just over a month of service. To see the excitement and community bonding that exists in almost every streetcar I enter has been a remarkable thing. I believe the opening of the streetcar will be remembered as a catalyst for transit support in our community and a milestone in our city's renaissance, a moment when things felt a little different than they did before. Also last month, we received the exciting news that we had received a federal grant to open our first bus rapid transit line. Bus rapid transit is a compromise between rail and bus that is a lot more affordable than rail and has proven popular in many communities around the nation. And finally, in a matter of days the first meeting of the state's first Regional Transit Authority will be held. The culmination of a decade of planning, this new entity joins OKC together with Edmond, Norman, Moore, Midwest City and Del City to plan an intercity commuter system. I am excited to tell you that OKC's two appointments to this historic undertaking are former Governor Brad Henry and longtime civic leader Mary Melon. This is a big challenge but they are excited to get started. So if you go down the list of items prioritized in 2005, we have realized major achievements in all of them just in the last two months. There is so much more to do but momentum is on our side.

The rest of our core services are for the large part in great position. We always have room for improvement, and the city works everyday to do things just a little better. And we'll talk in a moment about how upcoming initiatives may give us opportunities to take even bigger steps.

As I transition away from this overview of our core services, let me take a moment to thank the thousands of public servants who make this work happen. Of course, it starts with the City Council. In order of the eight wards, and if they would please stand if they are here, but please hold your

applause for a moment, they are James Greiner, Ed Shadid, Larry McAtee, Todd Stone, David Greenwell, Meg Salyer, Nikki Nice and Mark Stonecipher. They are true public servants who do a largely thankless job because they love this city. Two of them – Ed Shadid and Meg Salyer – will be leaving us in April. Let's thank all of our Council and especially Councilman Shadid and Councilwoman Salyer, for their service.

When you look at the Council, combined with my office, you might note that in April, a majority of the nine municipal elected officials will have served two years or less. The torch is being passed, but as I said earlier, we do not take lightly the responsibility we are being given.

That transition is also happening at the staff level. As many of you may know, the longest serving and finest city manager we have ever had retired this month. Jim Couch handed the keys to Craig Freeman. Jim is here today, let's give him a round of applause. His successor, is of course also here. Craig brings the highest level of integrity, incredible financial acumen, and a collaborative management style to the position. The Council and I are excited to work with him. This is an important position for our community, and let's give him a welcoming round of applause. Craig will soon be bringing with him two new assistant city managers, as longtime employees M.T. Berry and Dennis Clowers are retiring after many years of remarkable service. These selfless civil servants work alongside over 4,700 city employees – police officers, firefighters, line crews, lawyers, auditors, engineers, planners, people with all kinds of talents. It would be difficult to imagine an enterprise that does more different things than the City of Oklahoma City. We are blessed in our city to have the best city employees in the country. If all the city employees in the audience would please stand. Let's show our appreciation to all of our team at the city.

We also rely on the volunteer service of hundreds of community members who serve on dozens of boards and commissions that supplement and oversee the work of our employees. If you serve on a city board or commission, please stand and let us thank you for your volunteer service to our city.

One of those boards is the MAPS 3 Advisory Board, led by chairman Tom McDaniel. They have been hard at work for nearly a decade now, and that work is paying off. That transitions me to the second major priority I want to touch on today – our quality of life, led these last 25 years by our investments in MAPS.

Sometimes, it can seem like everyone talks about MAPS so much that it must be all we do. The reality is that in an average year, MAPS is less than ten percent of our total budget. It's just the cherry on top, but it has made all the difference in how we see ourselves and how others see us. It has transformed us and led to consistent economic growth we have all enjoyed, whether we as individuals ever set foot inside a MAPS project.

In the last year, I've had the great honor to help cut a ribbon on two major MAPS projects – the Pete White senior wellness center in Capitol Hill in South OKC, and the downtown streetcar I mentioned earlier. These projects follow the other MAPS 3 successes – the Riversport entertainment district, the northwest senior center, the State Fair's Bennett event center, and many, many miles of new trails and sidewalks. In the next two years, we'll cut the ribbons on two more major projects for our city – Scissortail Park and the convention center. The transformation happening just south of here is remarkable, and I remind you, it was first envisioned over a decade ago by the Core to Shore planning committee. The streetcar was first envisioned a quarter-century ago when it was first approved as a project in MAPS 1. I know that sometimes the slow pace of progress can seem oppressive when you're living it. Then you look back and it all seems like it happened so fast, your head is spinning. Just remember that we have a proven track record in this city of dreaming big and then making those dreams come true.

So let's talk about our next big dream. Let's talk about MAPS 4.

Earlier, I discussed the temporary sales tax for streets. Though street repair work will continue, that tax collection ends at the end of March, 2020. That means we as a community could have the opportunity to continue investing in things we consider important to our future without increasing the sales tax rate above where it is today. We'd have to make that decision as a community in a vote of the people near the end of this year. And your Council would have to present a package to you for your consideration around Labor Day. With all of that in mind, the Council and I opened the door this past Fall to your MAPS 4 ideas. We asked what was important to you. What are the challenges we need to meet and what are the opportunities we need to seize? We are doing this primarily through a web site – Ideas4MAPS.com – but we're also receiving ideas via mail, social media, conversations and meetings. I've posted in message boards, I've opened scary boxes that arrived at City Hall, I've left no stone unturned in seeking your feedback. Last week, I visited with kids from Positive Tomorrows at the downtown library to hear their thoughts. After all, MAPS initiatives are once-in-a-decade opportunities and the course we set is as much for those kids as it is for us.

This conversation is just now starting to transition from idea solicitation to discussion of those ideas. But the door for ideas is not closed. As I said earlier, we'll have two new Councilmembers arriving in April who will certainly want to contribute to this discussion. But I believe today is a moment to share a little of what we're hearing after three months of ideas.

Before I list the ideas, let me also say a word about the form of MAPS, which in the past has sometimes caused a perception that the MAPS impact has its limitations. Namely, MAPS is often perceived to be exclusively of use to capital projects. But there is actually a historic exception to that. MAPS 1 included endowments, funded through the use tax portion of sales tax, to fund operations of the projects. Those endowments were not structured to survive perpetually, but they could have been, and in any case they helped transition the projects to long-term success.

Those operation cost challenges are real, and they shouldn't be ignored. Additionally, some of the priorities I'm hearing for MAPS 4 are really not solved by bricks and mortar. They're addressed by people and programs, and those things cost money beyond the life of a temporary tax. And though I think MAPS should remain a temporary tax, this is not a conundrum we cannot solve. Again, we have the model from MAPS 1, and we could also tweak it in a way to make the endowments perpetual, extending the legacy forever. Put another way, the proceeds of a temporary tax, put aside and managed responsibly, could produce reasonably expected returns that meet certain specific needs till the end of time. This is a groundbreaking idea for government, but it's one commonly pursued by non-profits, wealthy individuals, universities, churches, the list goes on. Today, I'm asking you to consider this endowment concept in the months ahead. If at its root the MAPS model was an example of a government trying innovative new approaches to solving community challenges, this endowment concept is just as innovative, just as groundbreaking, just as powerful. In that regard, it is in the tradition of MAPS as much as anything else.

With that said, and with no further ado, here is what I'm hearing is important to you.

The general priorities I'm about to list are in no particular order, other than maybe alphabetical, and the fact I am uttering them out loud and even perhaps in a favorable light is not an endorsement of any particular one. My role is that of an honest broker getting us to an outcome that reflects a consensus of the people who love this city. This is and will continue to be a transparent discussion in our community for the next year, and that transparency continues today. You need to hear what I'm hearing.

We've received well over a thousand submissions, but these are the two dozen or so thus far that seem to have some traction and seem to fit the transformational tradition of MAPS.

First up, in alphabetical order - an aerospace job training center. This was suggested by the South OKC Chamber of Commerce.

New facilities for animal welfare.

A world class aquarium, perhaps downtown, operated by our OKC Zoo.

There have been various ideas in the arts. Support for the Art Museum, an endowment to sustain arts education in our schools, public art, a music embassy.

Beautification. There is still sometimes a perception that OKC has not paid enough attention to this issue. What would it look like if we put real money into what one might call extreme beautification of our highways, where we spend too much of our time? New pedestrian bridges in south OKC, new iconic bridges over the river, art, better retaining walls, landscaping along key corridors like I-44, I-240, I-35, the road from the airport. Beautification of this nature could also include gateways to the city, and placemaking in key corridors. Talk in this area has also centered around more trees, iconic landmarks, and an endowment to better maintain our medians.

Next, criminal justice reform. Mental health investments to take that pressure off of our county jail, perhaps. Or a facility to provide better re-entry for those involved in the criminal justice system.

Education. Though we don't operate the schools, and I'll talk more about education in a few minutes, perhaps we can find some ways in MAPS 4 to support them. This could include performing arts centers, STEM education centers, a teacher village, or endowments to support arts education, or to fund different ideas for supporting our teachers.

Homelessness. Facilities or an endowment to help meet this need. Our overall homeless population has decreased but unsheltered homeless has increased. We as a community have largely depended on nonprofits to address the issue of homelessness. Let me mention especially, I commend all of those working towards a new low-barrier shelter to open in the next year, and the work of the Curbside Chronicle remains innovative and inspiring. Last year, the city doubled our commitment to the Homeless Alliance day shelter, but perhaps the city needs to do more.

The Innovation District. What some may still call the health sciences center in near northeast Oklahoma City could receive investments to help turn it into a true Innovation district, a center for entrepreneurship. Our community still needs more infrastructure to truly have the entrepreneurial ecosystem a city of this size deserves. The job growth centerpiece of MAPS 4 could be a package of investments in the Innovation district. This could start with connectivity over the highway to better link the Innovation district with the central business district. It could also include a streetcar extension, an incubator/accelerator for start-ups, or a higher education consortium.

The Oklahoma River. Further investments there to continue supporting that unique jewel.

Palomar. A new facility to capitalize on the great momentum achieved by our family justice center, helping to serve victims of domestic violence in our city.

Parks. What would it look like if we invested in our neighborhood parks across the city? More amenities in every park, new playgrounds, covers for the playgrounds, new regional parks, and various unique amenities requested through the years, like dog parks and pickleball.

More senior wellness centers to continue the momentum of that project in MAPS 3.

A multipurpose stadium to be a permanent home for our Energy soccer team and to provide a venue for other sporting events, concerts and entertainment.

A new coliseum at the state fair to replace the rapidly aging Norick arena, maintaining our unique role as the home of horse shows, state basketball tournaments, the Oklahoma Youth Expo, and the various events during the annual State Fair, like Disney on Ice.

Upgrades to Chesapeake Arena to ensure it stays up to modern standards as well as investments in our NBA practice facility. This may surprise you but by the time many MAPS 4 projects will have been completed, we will be twenty years away from the Big League City vote of 2008. The Thunder has changed this city forever, but their lease ends in just five years. We as a community have to continue to invest in facilities, and not just for the Thunder. The Chesapeake Arena is our community gathering place for all kinds of entertainment and really drives so much about how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us.

Transit. It was the number one request in the MAPS 3 process and it is again in MAPS 4. As I said earlier, the Regional Transit Authority will take the lead on commuter transit between the cities in our metro, but MAPS 4 could play a role in transit within our city. This could include streetcar extensions, better bus service, more bus rapid transit, and bus shelters.

Establishing walkability continues to be a high priority for our city. MAPS 4 could include work towards completion of the city's recently adopted Bike/Walk plan. MAPS 4 could also include more trails and sidewalks. Four of the last five initiatives approved by voters have included sidewalks, but in a city this size, there is still much to do.

The youth of our city. I said earlier that we build these projects for our kids and our grandkids, and that has not been lost on our citizens because a lot of projects have come forward for how youth sports and arts can benefit our kids. This could include completion of a soccer facility that is a true regional draw, an aquatics center that our city currently lacks, a regional basketball facility. Also, probably other than transit, the thing I have heard the most so far is youth centers around our city, bringing together multiple partners and providing afterschool and summer opportunities for enrichment through sports and arts, to give all the children of OKC the same opportunities that many of us take for granted.

That is a lot of ideas for MAPS 4 projects, and I think it's important for me to say we can't do it all in MAPS 4. We simply can't. But we can do some of it. In fact, we could do a lot of it. But not all of it.

As you consider the ideas I've just laid out, I will observe that a couple themes seem to be emerging, and perhaps you noticed them as well. First of all, the crisis of 1993 was that there was simply nothing fun to do in Oklahoma City. As superficial as that may sound, we discovered it was an existential crisis. Our city was dying because people have choices as to where they live and largely because of how, well, lame it was here, they were choosing to live elsewhere. The subject matters of MAPS 1 and MAPS 3 were reactions to that very real problem.

In contrast, the subject matter of MAPS 2, better known as MAPS for Kids, was a reaction to a slightly different kind of problem. An education challenge that was affecting our city in almost every neighborhood. MAPS for Kids was MAPS for Neighborhoods before anyone started using that phrase. It was dealing with a social challenge and it was doing it neighborhood by neighborhood. So, the first theme I see emerging in these MAPS 4 ideas is that our citizens' priorities right now are as focused on the challenges faced by our neighborhoods and our people, and in many cases those who face the most challenges – as they are focused on fun stuff to do. Now, I don't want to see our city ignore the competition in which we are always engaged, a competition for jobs and talented young people. So, I still see a demand for and a place for some

inspiring and fun quality of life investments in MAPS 4. But I also see a theme emerging of balancing those priorities this time with the tough challenges some of our citizens face every day. You heard me mention things like mental health, homelessness, domestic violence, education. These are challenges I do not believe the people of Oklahoma City want to ignore in MAPS 4.

Second, I also see a theme of geographic distribution. I make no apology for how much of MAPS 1 and 3 were focused on downtown Oklahoma City. This area in which we sit is our entire community's neighborhood, and it defines us around the nation and the world. And it was a wasteland that needed support and investment, and it has received it. And much like we stepped back after MAPS 1 and invested more around the city in MAPS for Kids, I believe that demand exists once again. And that is not to say that not a single project in MAPS 4 may land downtown. Take updating of the arena for example. What would our city's identity be without the Thunder? To maintain that, we may absolutely need to invest in a quality of life project downtown. But when you look at the totality of the MAPS 4 initiative, both in subject matter and in geography, based on what I'm hearing so far, previous balances may shift.

I think the list of ideas so far is inspiring. The prospect that we might adopt some of these priorities as a community just under a year from now is exciting. This is a great time to be alive in Oklahoma City. We get to decide what we will look forward to for the next decade, just as we last did in 2009 when we adopted MAPS 3. But we have work to do, and for the next year we will be about it. Stay close and in touch, and be a part of this inclusive conversation.

The third topic I want to say a few words about is public education. Now, you're a sophisticated audience, so you know that the city has no operational control over our schools. In fact, we have 24 school districts in those vast city limits I described earlier. But without a doubt, Oklahoma City Public Schools faces the most challenges, is the largest district in our area and in fact the state, and it largely defines our education image as a city. In any case, whatever the district, public education is so critical to a city's success. No mayor wants to see his or her citizens depart for the suburbs or out of state, or for those without that economic mobility option, feel trapped in a school not meeting their needs. Public education remains the greatest challenge facing Oklahoma City, and I believe as mayor I must commit what I can offer to that need. And what I believe I can offer is to bring together the different leadership structures of our city. The decision made by the founders of this state to divorce cities and schools may or may not be the right one, but I know it has separated a whole group of elected leaders passionate about our community from arguably the most important service delivered by local government.

Two decades ago, as a community, we made a conscious decision to work around that challenge and citizens from every aspect of our city's leadership came together under the umbrella of an initiative known as Project Kids. That process lasted three years, it included dozens of community leaders, and it culminated in MAPS for Kids, though infrastructure was actually just one of the goals. As a community, we worked that plan for the better part of a decade, but faces changed and one by one, the copies of the Project Kids report found themselves in a drawer somewhere. We are a decade overdue for creating a vision for public education in Oklahoma City. And I'm not talking about the very important operational issues currently being addressed by the district's leadership, led by Paula Lewis and the school board, and superintendent Sean McDaniel. I'm talking about a forum for everyone's big, bold idea to be heard. I hear those ideas all the time. But they're definitely not things I could execute from City Hall, and they're usually too big for even the district to consider. They would require a unified effort from the city, the school district, the business community and the philanthropic community.

The Chamber has created the Compact, and that group has been valuable. If the Compact had existed a decade ago, perhaps the Project Kids goals wouldn't have faded. The work of the compact should continue, but we need a short-term convening as well, bringing together those different

aspects of the community that I mentioned – the city, the educators, the business leaders, the philanthropists – with the principal leaders at the table, ready to listen and collaborate and create a bold, unified vision for public education in Oklahoma City that will last us for a decade, before we probably have to do it again. So if it sounds like my plan is to make a plan, that's exactly what I just said. But that is in fact a condition precedent to getting anything done. And it also gives us the opportunity to seize back the narrative that events at the state level have given us. Imagine what it is like for me to sell Oklahoma City to outsiders when national headlines portray a lack of commitment to our state's education system. We need to have our own story to tell in Oklahoma City. We all have a lot on our plates, but this conversation needs to happen. Look for that group to come together in the months ahead.

And by the way, a similar effort is underway in Tulsa. My longtime friend GT Bynum, the Mayor of Tulsa, sees the same need in his city. Perhaps you have seen our burgeoning Turnpike bromance. We are working together closely because we believe OKC and Tulsa face many of the same challenges and we will be more successful if we work together and support one another, rather than compete as rivals. Urban public education is an issue on which we are probably absolutely aligned in our needs and our challenges. We both believe this is an issue on which we can share ideas and perhaps even work together at the State Capitol. And by the way, we have every reason to believe we will have great partners at the Capitol this year like Oklahoma City senator Greg Treat, now the leader of the Senate, Oklahoma City senator Kay Floyd, now the minority leader of the Senate, Oklahoma City representative Jon Echols, the majority leader of the House, and all of our Oklahoma City senators and representatives.

The final major topic I want to touch upon is the need to incorporate the diversity of our city into our decision-making process. And by diversity, I don't just mean ethnicity, though that matters, but also age, gender, geography.

Let me share a few statistical realities with you. We have had 36 mayors of this city. All 36 came from the north side. Today, we have those dozens of boards and commissions I mentioned earlier, with hundreds of community volunteers guiding the policymaking of our city. A study by *The Oklahoman* at the commencement of my term in office found that 90 percent of those board members were white and 70 percent were male. I think we can safely presume a similarly high percentage were from northwest Oklahoma City and that millennials were underrepresented.

Meanwhile, under the age of 18 in Oklahoma City, the population is 60 percent non-white, one can presume the city is roughly 50 percent female and that nearly half the city lives on the south side.

As mayor, I view the disconnect between our decision-making and our population as an issue we must confront. The current situation is not sustainable. It is my responsibility to do what I can to transition to a better way. If there are those who are not at the decision-making table, and let's face it, there are, then we must build a bigger table.

I can tackle this challenge in ways both substantive and symbolic. Substantively, my boards and commission appointments thus far have consciously sought to build a bigger table. On every board where I reasonably can, I have prioritized diversity. And it's not just about race. We need decision-making bodies that reflect the different ages and geographies of our city, as well as the life experiences of women. If you don't think the people of this city want to see women making more decisions, you weren't paying attention on election night in November.

As one example, let me introduce you to Jessica Martinez-Brooks, Trustee for the Oklahoma City Water Utilities Trust. The Water Trust is kind of important. Without it, we don't have water. Google tells me that without water, we've got three, four days max. The current iteration of our trust was formed in 1990, and Jessica is the first non-elected woman and first non-elected person of color to

serve on the Water Trust in that time. Jessica is an excellent public servant, we all benefit from her perspective. Jessica, thank you for your service.

In addition to appointments, I can also use the platform of my office to draw attention to the diverse cultures of our city. I'm doing that right now. And you might have seen the portraits of Oklahoma City children I hung in my office that reflect our city's future demographics. And if you follow me on social media, I hope I'm taking you outside of your bubble. We all live in our bubbles, and that's okay. It's human. And especially in a city as large as ours, we can do it quite easily. But I want you to see all the diversity that makes this city special. I want you to think about the struggle that African Americans in our city had to experience for so long until Clara Luper and her sit-inners students began to turn the tide 60 years ago. That's why I asked former Councilman Lee Cooper and businessman John Kennedy to chair an effort to place a significant remembrance of their civil rights struggle at the site of the Katz Drug Store where it all began. I want you to also consider how the lingering echoes of that institutional racism present challenges today. I want you to think about and appreciate our growing Latino community, our longtime Vietnamese community and the larger Asian community, our LGBT community, our Indian community, our Indigenous and Native communities. Some are more prevalent than others, but there is hardly a religious or international tradition that isn't practiced somewhere in some corner of our increasingly cosmopolitan and diverse big league city. Through understanding of that, we'll find continued empathy for each other, we'll continue to set aside the things that divide and work towards a common purpose. As we have for so long. But we must double down on the idea of One OKC, because everything else in this country wants to tear us apart right now. But it has been the Oklahoma City standard since that day in April 1995 not to let them do it. We are special here in Oklahoma City, and we must always hold that dear.

Thank you for your time today. There are so many more things I could have talked about, and I will in the years ahead. There are so many wonderful things happening in our city. The nonprofit community continues to fill needs where government hasn't. When I think of homelessness, criminal justice reform, education, youth extracurricular activities, the arts, the health of our community, literacy, and so many other things, I just don't know where we would be as a community without our nonprofits. I'd be embarrassed to list them all because it would take all afternoon and I would still leave someone out, but you know who you are, I know who you are, we know who you are, and thank you. Let's show our appreciation to our city's nonprofits.

There is much happening in our city beyond the things I had time to discuss today. The lowest unemployment rate in 18 years, led by the Amazon announcement, perhaps the single biggest jobs announcement in our city's history. Major announcements of new missions at Tinker Air Force Base. Continued high bond ratings reflecting strong fiscal management. Continued work on criminal justice reform. The excitement around Opportunity Zones and how they could help challenged areas like Northeast 23rd or the former Crossroads Mall site. The restart of the American Indian Cultural Center. New and exciting developments in the arts, like Factory Obscura and the construction of Oklahoma Contemporary. More progress towards the completion of our Land Run monuments. All the top tier concerts coming to Chesapeake Arena this year. A thriving food culture, led by the naming of Nonesuch as the best new restaurant in the country. Great work by our City-County Health Department, who opened a major new center last year in South OKC. The opening of the world-class Asia exhibit at the Zoo. The continued success of the OKC Memorial Marathon as it changes course to take in South OKC for the first time. The continuing addition of nonstop flights from our airport, now bringing us to 28, resulting in a record-breaking year of over four million passengers. The NBA championship parade we're going to host in June. We all still have those moments where we pinch ourselves and think how did we come so far? But 2019 is a year to think about what more we can do. And what we can do to ensure everyone feels that renaissance. 2019 is a big year. We have an ambitious agenda ahead of us. Let's work together to get it done, as we always have, as one OKC.

Thank you for the honor of being your Mayor, and I apologize to those who have Tweeted at me in the last 45 minutes. I've been busy, but I'll get right back to you.

May God continue to bless Oklahoma City and thank you for your time today.