**Mayor Bob Buckhorn   
State of the City 2017 AB/CB/BB Edits V.8 (3.30.17)**

Good morning

Choir /Council/electeds/colleagues/ friends/ our staff who work day in and day out to make sure this is the greatest city in America. . . thank you

Everyone, I’d like you to take a moment and think about where this city has come in just six short years…

Now, I know you’ve heard me say this before.

Maybe you’ve heard me say it many times before...

But I am going to say it again.

And I am going to keep saying it.

**[BREAK]**

Because we **cannot** forget how far we’ve come together

We **cannot** forget because we **cannot** go back.

As I look out in this crowd, I’m reminded of the African proverb “if you want to go quickly, go alone, if you want to go far, go together.”

Together, we brought this city back from rock bottom.

We brought this city back from the depths of the worst recession since the Great Depression...

Together we rose up, from the ashes of an economic apocalypse.

**[BREAK]**

Like the story of Nehemiah in the Old Testament, we were called to rebuild the walls of our City...

Together, we rebuilt the walls, the foundation, and the hopes. . .

House by house, street by street, neighborhood by neighborhood we joined together and believed in each other, believed that we would get through it together.

We knew it is always darkest before the dawn, but together we learned that only in darkness can you see the stars.

**[BREAK]**

Black, white, Hispanic. . . gay, straight. . .Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, young, not so young, whether you are from here or from somewhere else…

We are joined together by a belief that we are better **together**, that we are stronger **together** and that we will prosper together.

Look around you, look at this crowd, look at the diversity that makes up this great city. . .

**[BREAK]**

Some of your ancestors laid the foundation where we’re standing today ……

Some of you, like former Senator Arthenia Joyner sat down and went to jail so others can stand up.

Together we are the city in America that everyone is talking about. . .

Together we’ve created a city that Forbes just ranked one of the fastest growing cities in the country and the census confirmed.

Together we are creating jobs that people all over the world are flocking to, jobs in STEM, Tech, Cyber Security…

**[BREAK]**

Small business, large business. . . whether you’re a craftsman or you make craft beer, we have something for everyone here in Tampa.

We are a city whose overall employment has expanded by 24% in recent years. That makes Tampa 4th in the United States for new job opportunities since the recession.

A city that in just 6 short years has cut its unemployment by more than half.

We’re prospering today because we’ve streamlined our regulatory process, reduced the bureaucracy and added new technology to make sure that we were known as a place that was open for business.

**[BREAK]**

We’re investing nearly 24 million dollars in computing infrastructure, application replacements and upgrades to our technology to ensure Tampa can compete on every stage.

Together we cut red ribbons as we open new businesses instead of putting up red tape to shut them down.

Because we work together, Tampa is stronger and more competitive...

**[BREAK]**

**And today, the facts are in the numbers. . .**

In 2015 we permitted over $2.4 billion worth of construction.

In 2016 over $2.1 billion.

Since 2011 we have permitted over 11 billion dollars in projects.

Yes, I said over **$11 BILLION.**

Minority and women owned businesses account for an ever increasing percentage of city awarded contracts.

That means new jobs, more opportunities and more revenue.

**[BREAK]**

3 out of the last 6 years Tampa Bay has led the state in the number of new jobs created.

Those are jobs for Tampa families and opportunities for those young professionals who are flocking to Tampa.

When companies like, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Ashley Furniture, AMGEN, Johnson and Johnson, Blue Grace Logistics, DTCC and Citi are choosing to relocate and expand to Tampa means that, together, we have become a place…not a pass through.

**[BREAK]**

When the USF Med school chooses to relocate to downtown Tampa...Tampa wins

When University of Tampa’s Sykes College of Business is ranked one of the top in the country…Tampa wins

When Tampa Bay WaVE more than doubles the number of tech startups it supports…Tampa wins

HCC

When the Innovation Alliance is planning the rebirth of North Tampa built on the economic assets that are Moffitt Cancer Center, Florida Hospital, Busch Gardens and USF….together, Tampa wins

**[BREAK]**

When Ybor has added hundreds of new residential units and over 1.3 million sq feet of commercial development…..together, Tampa wins

When downtown has added over 6,000 residential units and nearly 300 hotel rooms...

When Westshore has added nearly 800,00 square feet of new commercial development and 1800 residential units since 2011…..Tampa wins

When our foreclosure rate dropped from 5% in 2010 to 1.8% today….Tampa wins

**[BREAK]**

Because we’re in this together, West Tampa is on the verge of a transformation of historic proportions.

We are moving a public housing project and an industrial yard from hopelessness to hope.

We’ve reimagined and are rebuilding Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park and planning for the addition of thousands of new residential units in the West River project. ……When West Tampa wins, Tampa wins together.

When East Tampa’s neighborhoods are stronger and safer thanks to the community’s involvement and the work of our great Tampa Police Department…

When crime in East Tampa drops another 8.9% for a total reduction of 24% in the last 6 years…. Tampa wins.

**[BREAK]**

When the children of our city are safer because our Stay and Play program has provided a safe haven from the gangs and guns and the violence on the streets. . . Tampa wins. . .

Since we started the program there has been over 100,000 visits…..don’t tell me that doesn’t make a difference.

There are children, in East Tampa who are alive today……

Children who are not statistics today…….

Teenagers who are not in the criminal justice system today…

Because together we cared enough to give them a place to just be kids.

**[BREAK]**

As our city prospers, we need to make sure that no neighborhood gets left behind.

That is why for 6 years we have worked hard to make all of our neighborhoods more livable, more walkable and more vibrant.

From the 92 miles of new bike lanes to the 45 miles of new sidewalks…

400 acres of new green space, including 10 new parks and over 9000 new trees, …

4 new or restored swimming pools

**[BREAK]**

And more than 9300 tons of trash and debris we’ve removed from Tampa’s neighborhoods through our W.I.N. program...

When we restore Tampa’s historic Cascaden pool, a part of Tampa’s history, where people here today, like Charlie Miranda and Yoli Capin, first learned to swim . . .Tampa wins together.

When we work together with the NFL to bring a new sports facility to Jackson Heights through the NFL YET program . . .Tampa wins.

Or when we partner with the Cal Ripken Foundation to build a new baseball field in Sulphur Springs. . .

**[BREAK]**

Or when we build three new fire stations and a fourth on the way in New Tampa….

Do you know in 2016 alone Tampa Fire Rescue went on **over 87,000 runs**?

Those services represent your tax dollars hard at work and when Tampanians are safe, when you call for help and we are right there with you,  we all win. . .

We’ve spent 122 million dollars on Stormwater improvements with another 75 million projected to be invested in the next two years.

[Thanks City Council!]

**[BREAK]**

Tell me the **56 thousand** potholes we have filled in 6 years doesn’t make your life and that of your automobile better.

Thanks to *Operation Bright Lights Safe Nights*, over 11,200 new street lights have been installed throughout city and because of the Mayor's Neighborhood University, 255 new neighborhood leaders and citizen activists will shine brightly for years to come.

Tampa’s neighborhoods are alive, engaged, involved and prepared to work together as we achieve what lies ahead for Tampa.

**[BREAK]**

Just like we worked together this year when we hosted the 2017 College Football Playoff.

We have become one of the top travel destinations in the country. Not just because we have one of the best airports in the world with 17 new nonstop flights and a ground breaking $1 billion dollar investment, but, because of you, we have created an identity like none other.

All over the country we are recognized for our Riverwalk, our downtown transformation, our distinct neighborhoods and our burgeoning food and beer scene and because of that we’ve attracted some of the largest events in the world.

**[BREAK]**

Whether we’re determining the fate of the free world at the Republican National Convention, dancing the Pun-Gra at Bollywood, or cheering on our favorite college football team at the College Football Playoff, Tampa wins. . .

Tampa has become a beacon for events on the international stage because together, we do them better than any city in America.   
  
Just 3 months ago hundreds of thousands poured in to take part in what is one of America’s greatest pastimes….the College Football Playoff.

**[BREAK]**

Whether you were a Clemson fan or an Alabama fan or just someone in town to take it all in, all eyes were on Tampa and we never looked better.

But it’s not all about what we do in the spotlight, we don’t stop leading when the cameras turn off. Day in and day out we work, we innovate, we advocate for each and every person who calls Tampa home.

We want every person, every family, to be able to come to Tampa and feel they are part of who we are.

**[BREAK]**

That’s why this year, we are embarking on a new initiative - **Autism Friendly Tampa**. Coincidently, this month is Autism Awareness Month.

One in every 68 individuals is affected by Autism. Many of you may have children, friends, siblings, or neighbors who have been touched by person with Autism.

And each one of those affected, have their own unique challenges. A seemingly simple trip to the pool or downtown event can be complicated. Finding a summer program could be impossible.

**[BREAK]**

As Mayor, I am committed to making our public spaces, city facilities, parks, and programs more friendly for those affected with Autism and related disabilities.

We are going to train city staff, starting with our first responders and Parks and Recreation teams, to learn what Autism is, how it affects a person’s ability to communicate and socialize and how we can better serve those affected.

We are going to develop an Autism Friendly Tampa guide which will outline programs, places, events, and schedules that are the most accessible for those with Autism.

**[BREAK]**

We are going to focus our resources in our parks and city facilities to develop visual signage and designated quiet spaces.

We are going to increase our Autism Friendly programming and look for innovative ways to incorporate those affected with Autism in our current summer camps and programs.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated partner, **the Center for Autism & Related Disabilities housed at the University of South Florida.**

**[BREAK]**

They are providing training, guidance, and resources to us that will make us an even more welcoming and inclusive City.

I couldn't be more thankful for their time and commitment.

To those from CARD here today, thank you.

I am certain that, together, we will change the lives of our friends, family, and neighbors affected with Autism that live here in Tampa.

Our story is their story and we want to give them the same experience in this great city we all have -  more fun, more friends, and more acceptance.

**[BREAK]**

Being an actor on the national and global stage comes with a responsibility to set an example of what a well-run and progressive city looks like.

Not only do we exemplify what it means to be inclusive and open for business but we are also leading on what it is like to provide a 21st century workforce for 21st century families.

That’s why we announced just two months ago that the City of Tampa is now providing paid parental leave to its more than 4,300 employees.

**[BREAK]**

Aside from the health and economic benefits to families, this policy will ensure we continue to attract and retain the most talented workforce to the City of Tampa - the young women and men of tomorrow who will keep this city moving forward.

Far too often, paid parental leave is viewed as a women's issue.

Today women make up nearly half of the American workforce. Outdated workplace policies that make life harder for women, make life harder for families and harder for children.

**[BREAK]**

These policies affect our economic competitiveness as cities, as businesses and as a nation.

That’s why Tampa is leading on paid parental leave, and in just the short time since our announcement we have seen other governments as close as our own Hillsborough County and from as far away as Portland, Oregon looking to Tampa as a template for their own workplace policies.

And we don’t intend to stop inspiring other cities any time soon...

Together, this city has championed new innovation and technology.

Tampa has taken a “city as a lab” approach which means no good idea is off the table. It means we aren’t afraid to test the newest innovations in transportation, public safety, water…

because if it doesn't work we can move on to what is next.

But when it does, when we pilot driverless cars, connected vehicles, advancements in water reuse and data sharing…

When it works, Tampa wins.

**[BREAK]**

And let me tell you, it's working.

Together, we are leading the nation in deployment of Autonomous and Connected Vehicle technology.

Driverless vehicles operating on our city streets, just blocks from where we are today, will be a reality over the next years.

A connected vehicle pilot program is launching on the Selmon Expressway. Technology in city infrastructure will be installed in 38 locations downtown.

**[BREAK]**

Imagine commuting in a city where your car is talking to the environment around it, sharing information, and make changes based on those two-way communications.

This technology will improve pedestrian safety, address traffic congestion, improve transit operations, and prevent wrong-way crashes.

And Tampa is the testbed.

Together, we have bolstered a brand, a reputation, for a place where technology is embraced, developed, and applied.

That's not limited to our cars.

**[BREAK]**

Tampa is working closely with TECO on leveraging a Citywide smart grid which will enable us to deploy sensors to detect flooding, monitor the weather, manage parking garages and much more.

We have partnered with Waze, Google’s premier traffic app, to share data and make sure commutes for residents and travels for visitors are quicker and safer.

Through InVision Tampa Streetcar, we are exploring the newest technologies for our downtown to decide what will work for Tampa - for our unique urban core and the people who live, work and play there.

**[BREAK]**

New programs and technology come with a price tag. In order to make investments in our people and our city, Tampa needs to stand on the firmest of fiscal grounds.

When I was elected Mayor I set out to do a complete assessment of all of our departments, to find ways to cut spending, and do an overall deep dive into our budget to ensure taxpayers were getting more for less.

In the last six years, working together with our team in Revenue and Finance, we’ve been able to secure 12 credit ranking increases. The S&P cited that their increase reflects their view of the *“city's very strong flexibility, liquidity, and supported by its very strong management practices.*"

**[BREAK]**

It’s those practices that have landed Tampa among the top cities to live, do business, and raise a family.

Like most American cities, we are not out of the woods yet, the impact of the recession was severe and the recovery was slow.

As you know, property tax revenues are the primary source of money used to fund much of what we need to do.

From the Tampa Police Department and Tampa Fire Rescue to Parks and Recreation and many other departments in between, we depend on property tax revenue to provide the service our citizens have come to expect.

**[BREAK]**

In 2007, we generated over $166.2 million dollars in property tax revenues.

That is $12.8 million dollars more in property taxes than the budget I submitted to City Council for 2017 for a total loss of over $285.7 million dollars in property tax revenue in the last decade.

Let me say that again 2007 our property tax revenues totaled $166 million dollars. The budget I just submitted to council this fall included only $153 million.

Due to “Save our Homes”, our ability to recapture the revenue lost during the recession is severely hampered.

**[BREAK]**

Even though home values are rising again and have reached 2007 levels or higher, we can only recapture a maximum of 3% a year. That means we will not be back to 2007 levels until fiscal year ‘19.

The reality is that in my eight years as Mayor, we will not have a single budget that starts out in the black.

And moving forward, there will be more tough choices for this administration and the City Council to make.

We have done our part to keep our costs within our means while providing innovative new programs and new ways to fix old challenges.

**[BREAK]**

In the 6 years since I have been Mayor, our employee count has increased by 2.

That means the extensive and difficult staffing cuts that were made at the height of the Great Recession, we have made permanent. Instead of reversing course, we have found ways to do more with less.

To some degree we can control our costs, but there are things outside of our control that significantly affect our bottom line.

**[BREAK]**

Rising health care costs, increasing pension costs that are tied to the stock market fluctuations and a more recent threat, the uncertainty in Tallahassee and Washington DC.

The decisions made in the Florida Legislature and the United States Congress will have a direct and tangible impact on the services we provide and the resources we have available.

Sources of revenue reduced or eliminated, partnerships eviscerated, and programs decimated are potentially looming.

All of which have the potential to affect Tampa’s financial future, that combined with an unprecedented attack on our nation’s cities and their right of self governance impairs our ability to secure our financial future.

**[BREAK]**

Yet in spite of this fiscal reality and political uncertainty, we continue to persevere.

It's been a long and arduous journey, but we continue to provide more services, more summer camps, more parks, more bicycle lanes, safer communities…

And we do it all with the leanest and hardest working team you’ll find anywhere in the U.S.

But in spite of all of this, we continue to move forward

Our faith moving forward is stronger than our fear.

**[BRING IT HOME]**

**[BREAK]**

So I will leave you with this. This is a special moment for Tampa . . . while we have our challenges ahead, I have never been more optimistic about our future.

This is a different city than it was 6 years ago and it’s last chapter has yet to be written.

Where there was despair. . .there is optimism.

Where there was hurt. . . there is now joy.

Where there was decline. . .there is now a renewed sense of progress.

**[BREAK]**

They can issue the executive orders in Washington, D.C….but they can’t extinguish hope.

They can do damage in Tallahassee but they cannot deny our future. . .

Our course moving forward will be determined by us. . .

Our path built on the foundation of those immigrant families will guide us.

Be it the voices of the lector in the cigar factories or in the melodies of the old spirituals sung at St. Paul AME, they knew we had to press on to a better day.

**[BREAK]**

To never be satisfied with our success.

We have work yet to do because our tomorrow starts today.

Tampa, never stop believing that we can’t be that shining city on the hill . . .

Never underestimate the power of a committed community. . .

Never think that your voice doesn’t matter. . .

Your voice can change your neighborhood and if you change your neighborhood you can help to change our city.

**[BREAK]**

I need your voice. I have **725** days left as your mayor.

I came here not to do little things but to do big things.

To leave this city in better shape than it was given to me.

To prepare Tampa for its next chapter.

To give hope to the least, the last, and the lost.

**[BREAK]**

To empower our neighborhoods and invest in the infrastructure of opportunity.

To make this the city in America where the best and the brightest want to come.

I intend to finish strong and I can not wait to see what Tampa’s next chapter looks like.

To quote Dr. King, “If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.”

Tampa ---**together** we will keep moving forward.

**[END]**