

CITY OF TACOMA

March 16, 2023

State of the City Address - "Building Tomorrow Together"

Wow! What an impactful spoken word performance! Please join me in sharing our appreciation for our poet, Nakanee Monique.

Just *one* example of our amazing creative community!

Good evening, and thank you for joining me for our 2023 State of the City Address! I am so very happy to have you all here with me in Mount Tahoma's auditorium *in person*!

Tonight, we will reflect on where we are as a city and the future we want to build together, because 2023 is a year for Building Tomorrow Together.

Building is an act of creation, determination, discipline, and cooperation. Building takes time and vision. Great and enduring visions are built together.

To build a community, voices and ideas need to come together in support of a future where every resident can thrive.

Speaking of together, as we start this evening, there are far too many names to say thank you to, but I have to acknowledge a few starting with tonight's Emcees:

Andrea Reay, CEO of the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, whose first year on the job has been impactful thanks to her extensive experience in community development, and we have already made great strides together to support our business community; and

Tara Zolfaghari, Vice Chair of the Mayor's Youth Commission, who not only brings an impressive level of leadership to our community, but has also blazed trails at the State level as Vice Chair of the Washington Legislative Youth Advisory Council. Tara, and others like her, are defining our young leaders.

There is the family you are born into and the family you choose in life.

I want to take this moment to thank my mother who brought me into the world, and the family I chose and accepted me for their love, compassion, and support.

I may be on this stage alone this evening, but I don't do this work alone. I have the honor of being 1 of 9 on our City Council, and together we are addressing the opportunities and challenges that face our community.

I am deeply grateful for my City Council colleagues who, with the recent appointment of Olgy Diaz, now make up the most diverse City Council in Tacoma's history.

This Council - which already had a female majority - now also has a majority of BIPOC leaders, truly reflecting the community we serve.

I am also grateful for City Manager Elizabeth Pauli and Utility Director Jackie Flowers, their leadership teams, and the nearly 4,000 employees who carry out the essential work of our City.

I see you, and your efforts have not gone unnoticed. Thank you so very much for the work you do every day.

Thank you to my staff...

To all of our government, business, nonprofit partners. I am grateful for your commitment to serve Tacoma residents every single day.

I want to offer special recognition to those who serve on our City committees, boards, and commissions, advising on everything from zoning to community investments and policy.

And, most importantly, I want to thank every member of our community who invests their time and energy by volunteering, tirelessly calling or emailing City Hall, compassionately caring for neighbors, nurturing our youth, protecting our environment, advocating for causes that are near and dear to their hearts, or choosing to grow their business here.

Please join me in a round of applause for all who dedicate so much to make our City great.

We are all building Tacoma's future together, with every action we take, and every life we touch. We share the responsibility for building a better tomorrow.

Last year, as we completed the biennial budget, we prioritized *your* input, and your concerns were clear: Community safety, housing, homelessness, and livability.

That's why we set out to fund programs addressing public safety and violent crime, affordable housing, and homelessness.

Let me be clear, despite immense budgetary pressures, we made ZERO cuts in these priority areas.

In fact, our 2023-24 budget invests a record-setting \$372 million dollars in community safety and \$101 million dollars in housing and homelessness.

The City's biennial budget is our moral document and reflects the community's values. It is also a blueprint for action as we continue to build a more secure, affordable, livable, and equitable community.

Speaking of our values, through and beyond the budget, we've taken many steps that continue to embed Resolution 40622 into the very foundation of our work to become an anti-racist organization:

- We built the Office of Equity and Human Rights into the heart of the City's municipal code and added anti-racism to the City Manager's job duties, thereby ingraining equity into the City's work beyond any one leader's tenure.
- We've reestablished and refocused our Office of Strategy to ensure our daily efforts are marching toward the community's long-term vision for our city.
- Because my Council and I believe that language should not be a barrier when someone seeks to connect with their government, we are expanding translations to reach more people. Including tonight as we broadcast in four

different languages.

These are just a few of the steps we are taking.

Over the last year, each department presented an action plan to center equity into our hiring, engagement efforts, and service delivery. You can view our progress on these objectives and others by visiting our website.

Our values are embedded into everything we do. Now, our job is to assemble these building blocks into impactful solutions that address the most pressing issues facing us today.

Tonight, I will dig in and share how your local government is doing *its* part to Build Tomorrow Together.

We are leaning into our challenges, and **we have all the raw materials we need to build something truly special.**

Safety is foundational to building community, and the reality is, too many of our neighbors no longer feel secure.

When it comes to crime, our community is trying to process a deeply distressing uptick in violence, a disturbing national trend that has not left Tacoma unscathed.

Nationally, homicides were 34% higher in 2022 when compared to 2019.

Locally, total homicides reached an all-time-high last year, resulting in a loss of 45 lives.

This is *not* the type of record we want to set.

Tragically, we have already lost 6 lives to homicide this year - 3 of which happened in just the first 3 weeks, and heartbreakingly, involved gun violence among our youth.

As I have said before, this level of violence is unacceptable and *must stop*. We cannot give up: We cannot give up on ourselves, on each other, or on the city we

all love.

Last summer, we completed an assessment to better understand the levels of violence among youth under 30. One thing we learned, is that firearms are too easy for our youth to access: Nearly 5% of 12th-graders admitted to carrying a weapon to school at some point. And just yesterday, as I sat in this same building, students told me how easy it was to get a gun.

Police Department data shows that every 48 hours a gun is stolen from a car. Not from a person... or a home... but from an unattended car. Gun owners have a right to carry a gun, but also have the responsibility to secure it. Because these guns are falling into the hands of our youth and being used in violent crimes.

With this baseline data, we directed additional investment in preventative programs and, alongside our community partners, we are tracking progress and trends to intervene where youth need it most.

We know it is imperative to take a comprehensive approach to safety and crime. Part of that is ensuring accessible infrastructure through programs like Vision Zero and Safe Routes to School.

We need to add more police resources, and we need to free up our officers to do what they're trained to do: *protect* and *serve*. We can't expect them to simultaneously be social workers, substance use disorder and mental health counselors, and more.

There are capable professionals outside of law enforcement who are specifically trained to serve people who may need help navigating a difficult time in their lives.

In response to our community's concerns around property crime and other nonviolent crime, I am happy to report that last week in partnership with our Police Union, we have negotiated a leading-edge Community Services Officer program. To put this in place as quickly as possible, in the coming weeks, I will be working with my Council to commit a million dollars to hire our first Community Services Officers.

The program is designed to increase the level of response, and provide an appropriate level of support in non-emergency situations that pose no active threat to life or property. This will allow our fully-commissioned officers to focus on the most urgent calls.

We are also implementing a Behavioral Health Crisis Response Team. The Team, housed in the Tacoma Fire Department, is designed to provide appropriate resources to people in crisis, and move them toward healing.

The Tacoma Fire Department has had an excellent track record with the TFD CARES program, which connects frequent 911 callers with appropriate levels of service for non-emergent medical and psychiatric needs. So, I am very excited about bringing this program online.

Tonight, as we promised, my top priority for this year is already beginning to happen.

I am proud to share that we have hired 2 experts to establish and co-lead the Behavioral Health Crisis Response team - ahead of the first quarter goal.

Join me in welcoming Aleesia Morales and Cassie Hallstone. They bring a vital understanding of the need for transparency, knowledge of the community behavioral health and criminal court systems, stakeholder outreach expertise, and experience with program development. Aleesia and Cassie, will you please stand.

I want to be clear, *none* of our approaches are designed to replace police, but to support them: Our Officers are critical to reducing crime and creating a secure environment.

With the hiring of 53 officers in 2022, we are currently down to 29 officer vacancies, and over 50 officers eligible for retirement in the next 3 years. Due to the extensive training required to become a commissioned officer, hiring remains a top priority.

To focus on this effort, we have already brought on a new recruiting officer, and last year approved incentives for lateral hires. We have also negotiated with the Union to hire temporary background investigators to speed up the recruitment

process.

To maintain a highly effective police force while simultaneously hiring new officers, we're also introducing a \$10,000 dollar retention and recruitment incentive to recognize the outstanding work our officers perform under extremely challenging circumstances, and attract new law enforcement professionals to the team.

Adequate capacity will be crucial as we continue to refine our approach to community safety, decrease property crimes, and maximize the impact of our Violent Crime Reduction Plan.

This Plan is transforming our approach to be more focused, data-driven, and evidence-based. In the coming weeks we will enter Phase 2, with an emphasis on Problem-Oriented, Place-Based Policing, or changing the conditions that make crime more likely to occur.

Our goals are to continue to clean up areas of blight, fix shattered glass, institute neighborhood watches, expand community programs or services, and continue, as in Phase 1, to station visible patrol cars at strategic times and locations.

We are already seeing results. During the first 90 days of Phase 1, violent crime dropped 30% at 16 hot spots.

In the 60 days that followed, violent crime dropped 36% at 15 hot spots.

Now, I know that these numbers may not reflect what people are FEELING, especially with the increase in homicides last year.

However, when we determine overall levels of violent crime, we look at a combination of 4 statistics. So, OVERALL, across ALL categories combined, we are still moving in the right direction.

But numbers alone cannot relieve the feelings and concerns of the people who are impacted.

We know that we must understand community needs to provide the appropriate safety services and programs. I want to thank those who have persistently demanded a community-level response in times of crisis.

That's why I am proud to announce our first Community Trauma Response Team provided in partnership with Tacoma Cease Fire.

The Community Trauma Response Teams will enhance our response to traumatic events, and ensure we are better supporting our neighbors impacted by violence. Our goal is to partner with culturally appropriate organizations who can be there for our neighbors in times of need.

Let's return to the topic of youth violence. We engage youth through a variety of programming across the city, including after school activities, mental health resources, mentorship opportunities - and more.

In the current budget, we are investing in hope and opportunity for our youth by doubling the funding to over \$2 million dollars for youth violence prevention programs, working upstream to give our youth more positive alternatives.

I've also convened our local partners - Pierce County, Metro Parks, Tacoma Public Schools, Pierce Transit, the Health Department, and the Puyallup Tribe - to focus our resources in a concerted effort to break this cycle of violence.

On a regional level, I am proud to announce we are working with the Alliance for Gun Responsibility, regional, and State government partners to plan an upcoming event -- *The Together We End Gun Violence Conference* -- that will happen in Tacoma on May 25th and 26th, and will convene community members, national experts, and state, county, and city officials to identify and amplify community led solutions to gun violence reduction in Washington State. And tonight, I am excited to announce that we will be a sponsor. Stay tuned for details.

Nationally, through my role as President of the National League of Cities, we're connecting with subject matter experts from across the country on violence intervention to learn what resources and lessons might enhance our work with local partners.

This spring, we are also launching our Community Safety Plan because safety is more than just policing.

We want this plan to be guided by community voices and perspectives. That is why, in addition to drawing on your prior feedback, we will include outreach and engagement efforts, set to start in the coming weeks.

The Community Safety Plan will align with the Violent Crime Reduction Plan and other existing initiatives, including our Youth and Young Adult Violence Reduction Task Force, to ensure we address the issue of safety holistically.

The Community Safety Plan gives us a blueprint for going beyond traditional policing and strategically coordinating our investments to create a Safer Tomorrow Together!

Please join us in this work!

While safety is foundational for a thriving community, if people who work here can't afford to live here, we lose the true meaning of community.

I always say the thing that makes Tacoma the best city in the universe are the people who call it home.

To build a better tomorrow, we must have more affordable housing, accessible in every neighborhood at every income level. Period.

Housing affordability is a challenge everywhere you look. The Washington State Department of Commerce recently said we'll need 1.1 million more homes state-wide over the next 20 years, and more than half of them need to be truly affordable.

Locally, our Home in Tacoma project plans for 60,000 new housing units by 2040. While an ambitious goal, that is still not enough to meet the need.

To that end, our Affordable Housing Action Strategy is now in its 5th year of implementation. This strategy is a coordinated, multi-departmental effort

intended to:

- Create more homes for more people;
- Keep housing affordable and in good repair;
- Help people stay in their homes and communities; and
- Reduce barriers for people who often encounter them.

We have made real progress in meeting the housing need in Tacoma:

- Since 2019, we've permitted over 7,000 new homes, over 4,000 of these are already built.
- 413 of the built units are affordable for residents at or below 60% of the Pierce County median family income, which based on a family of 4 is about \$61,000.
- 241 more units are in the pipeline right now at or below that income threshold.
- We have brought 345 more accessory dwelling units, into circulation in the last 4 years so seniors can keep their homes, and young people can afford to live here.
- We added half-million dollars in funding for black homeownership down payment assistance.
- And we're funding several anti-displacement measures, like rehab projects, mortgage and foreclosure assistance, to keep people from losing their homes. We are also developing a brand-new strategy that will lay out fresh policy options to avoid displacing residents as our city grows.

This work is vitally important, because ultimately, housing is the solution to homelessness.

Our Neighborhood and Community Services Department is putting into action a

new Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness, in alignment with our partners at the County. We envision a future where all residents have a roof over their head, and homelessness is a rare, brief, and one-time experience.

Our updated, multifaceted approach calls for immediate access to shelter, and for building enough permanent supportive housing to meet the need.

- As of December 31, 2022, a total of 1,165 shelter beds were available across our networks in the City of Tacoma.
- According to the 2022 Point in Time Count, there are at least 1,851 homeless individuals across Pierce County, about 75% of whom reported sleeping in Tacoma.

This issue extends beyond our city limits, and we are actively coordinating with our government partners across the county to advance this work.

As we continue to confront the impact of homelessness, we must consider the complex variety of needs of our unhoused neighbors.

In 2022, we set up 2 new mitigation sites, which are specifically designed to provide a safe experience for our neighbors who live in tents.

We are also launching a safe parking program in partnership with Holy Rosary, where people can live temporarily out of their car, truck, or van, because 6% of our county's unhoused neighbors live in their vehicles.

They rely on their vehicles not just for shelter, but also for daily activities, such as commuting to work. By designating places where they can park, they will be more secure and have access to basic hygiene services.

The goal in each case is to connect people with permanent housing options and services, while stabilizing their day-to-day living conditions.

While the issue of homelessness can be overwhelming, I want you to know, *we are* making steady progress:

- Last year, we housed well over 3,000 individuals across our entire shelter network, including over 1,600 through our temporary and emergency shelters.
- And we placed 549 of our unhoused neighbors into permanent housing.

I want to tell you about one individual who found permanent housing last year - for the sake of privacy, we'll call him "Arthur." Arthur is a veteran who sought shelter at the Forward Operating Base Hope Veteran's Village, which just opened last May, and is funded in part through the City.

Arthur had been living on Tacoma's streets for *7 years*, and arrived within weeks of the shelter opening.

It was clear he had a tough relationship with alcohol, and a case manager convinced him to quit drinking. He went "cold turkey," which says a lot about his determination. And *he succeeded!*

That opened the door for a federal housing voucher. But he felt unworthy, still carrying a burden of guilt for his past mistakes, until his peers at the shelter helped him realize he *deserved* a place to call his own.

Within weeks, he had a voucher in-hand, and permanent housing came quickly thereafter. But, even with a place of his own, he kept returning to the Village because he enjoyed the camaraderie and support of his peers.

Arthur took it upon himself to mentor other veterans with similar stories, telling them if he could transform his life, they could too. Two of these veterans, who were so moved by his story, also chose sobriety, and secured permanent housing.

Arthur *is* an inspiration to us all. His transformation became a doorway for others' transformations, and he continues mentoring others to this day.

Which begs the question: If one person, with the support of their community, can spark such change, what could each of us accomplish? What ripples can WE start?

I am here to tell you tonight individual impacts can be *life changing*. Together, we are a powerful collective force equal to the task of solving an issue as challenging

as homelessness.

But to effectively change lives as Arthur did, we must be able to connect with the stories of others.

To make us more powerful change agents around homelessness, I call on each of you to join me in learning from, and engaging with, stories that remind us of the vast humanity we all share.

One of the greatest ways to engage in the stories of others is through books. This year I couldn't be more thrilled that our Tacoma Reads selections intentionally connect to the issue of housing and homelessness in a way that nurtures understanding and empathy.

I'm pleased to announce our main title - a heart-wrenching and inspiring story about young people - pulls back the curtain on homelessness and poverty in the lives of children. This compelling personal account is told through the lens of a child surviving it daily.

Our main selection is... *A Place Called Home: a memoir*, by David Ambroz.

Our young adult novel is... *Genesis Begins Again*, by Alicia D. Williams, featuring a 13-year-old who overcomes eviction, internalized racism, and abuse.

And last but not least, our children's book selection is... *Home*, by Tonya Lippert, a story of 2 siblings thrust into homelessness and the challenges they face, to define, what home means.

I want to personally invite all of you to our annual Tacoma Reads event which will take place on Saturday, November 4th in Philip Hall on the University of Washington Tacoma Campus. We would like to express our gratitude to the UWT Library for this new partnership.

Connect with Tacoma Public Library for details about how you can deepen your learning through Tacoma Reads program and the lived experience each selection shares.

Before I go any further, I want to pause and reflect on the leadership of a woman who advocated tirelessly and effectively to end homelessness, Maureen Howard - like Arthur, is a true example of how we ALL can make a difference.

Maureen firmly believed that people have a right to a place to live. She dedicated her life to advocating for housing and protections, for residents, so they would not lose their homes.

She passed away earlier this year. Though our hearts mourn, I want to celebrate her contributions because they challenge us to step up, lean into the tough issues, and carry on her legacy.

Thank you, Maureen.

Now, if safety forms the foundation for a thriving community, and housing provides the walls and roofing that shelter us, then livability is what makes Tacoma a place we're proud to call home.

To be clear, part of why we face such high demand for housing is because people want to live here. Tacoma is regularly noted in national publications for its livability.

With our beautiful parks, picturesque waterfront, creative community, world-class academic opportunities, and the uniquely diverse character of our neighborhoods and business districts, we enjoy an incredible quality of life.

But as we plan for our future livability, we know the decades ahead will bring a more volatile climate.

It can be hard to focus on issues like climate change amid pressing human tragedies like homelessness or lives lost to gun violence. But we must build resiliency NOW, especially in light of the volatility we already face.

Our updated Climate Action Plan sets aggressive goals for net zero carbon emissions by 2050. This biennium, we're funding green jobs; air quality relief; vehicle electrification; and more.

When it comes to electrification, Tacoma's Water Department is replacing the vans its field technicians use with all-electric models.

Additionally, all 15 Neighborhood Business Districts now have streetside electric vehicle charging stations, 8 of which are in historically underinvested areas. Local business employees and customers use them by day, and residents use them by night.

Best of all, Tacoma-charged electric vehicles produce zero emissions, because 97% of Tacoma Power's energy is carbon-free.

Even Tacoma Rail is seeking to go electric, hoping to bring the first electric locomotive to Washington, making an already low-carbon transport technology even more green!

Clearly, electrification is important to our future. But so are transportation choices. That's why we're making it safer to bike, walk, and roll across the city - and to connect to transit.

Finally, we know climate impacts will be disproportionately felt, and clean air shouldn't be limited to only the neighborhoods that can afford it. Last summer, the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department distributed 540 filter fans to Tacoma residents.

To truly move the needle on climate change requires leadership at the state, national, and global levels. That doesn't mean we can't do our part as a City, and that's our mission.

What's more, our local businesses are already leading by example, creating the green technologies of the future, right here in Tacoma.

We partner with Washington Maritime Blue on the Tacoma Maritime Innovation Incubator, which graduated its first cohort of 5 companies last year.

Several of the incubated companies have since hired full-time employees and established operations here, including
, which is gaining national recognition for its efforts to remove toxic man-made

chemicals from water.

Now, 5 more companies are at the incubator working on carbon capture, electric grid management, electric outboard motors, and other forward-looking innovations.

Speaking of the maritime sector, SAFE Boats - a shipbuilder for first-responder vessels - returned to Tacoma's harbor 2 years ago. By the end of this year, they will have added 75 manufacturing jobs to Tacoma's working waterfront, and they plan to expand into boatbuilding for the offshore wind industry.

These are excellent manufacturing jobs that not only pay great wages but also tackle critical environmental challenges. As jobs and the environment increasingly intertwine, we are specifically cultivating our Green Economy.

At the end of last year, we received a 5-year, half-million dollar federal grant to encourage job training in Brownfield Remediation. Our partner, Clover Park Technical College, will train 105 participants for placement into green jobs. Thereby matching workers with in-demand jobs.

We will soon unveil a Green Jobs Strategy that combines the work of regional stakeholders, advisors, and partners to plan for growth in 3 sectors: Green hydrogen, the Circular Economy, and Green Building.

Our business community defines so much of Tacoma's character, making it a place where people love to live, learn, visit, dine, shop, work, AND play.

I can't talk about businesses without acknowledging one of our hometown *globally* recognized companies. This year we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Almond Roca! Happy Anniversary!

The pandemic brought profound risk and uncertainties, especially for our small businesses. That's why we, as a public agency, continued to step up to help.

- Last year, we supported 4,700 small businesses through our Minority Development Business Agency.

- We loaned almost \$6½ million dollars to 636 small businesses to survive, recover, and thrive.
- And our Community and Economic Development Department awarded \$3 million dollars in Recovery grants, more than half of which went to BIPOC-owned businesses.

And, I'm pleased to announce that the state recently awarded us a \$1 million dollar grant so we can follow through on specific assistance requests that are still arising from the pandemic.

With this funding, we're offering a Small Business Restoration Grant and an Advance-level Technical Assistance program.

The Restoration Grant supports both property damage repair and market enhancements - physical upgrades required by code to open or stay open.

The Technical Assistance Program will help scores of small businesses with financial management, production efficiency, digital marketing, and e-commerce.

We are grateful to the Department of Commerce for making this support possible because a strong business sector brings jobs, and jobs open doors to a higher quality of life.

To leverage these opportunities, we must prepare our workforce for jobs across high-demand sectors, and jobs that pay living wages.

While we continue to build great jobs, we know that 40% of pre-pandemic households are ALICE. ALICE is defined as asset limited, income constrained, and employed.

To support these motivated families last year, we launched Growing Resilience in Tacoma, GRIT. This program, a much-needed supplement to families who desperately need a financial safety net, gave 110 families \$500.00 dollars a month for 13 months.

Let me tell you about Geno.

Geno is a single father in Tacoma raising three boys. He works as a technology consultant for a small company and sustains his household paycheck-to-paycheck. He, like so many others, makes just a little too much income to receive support from the public benefits system.

With one kid needing diabetes medication, another needing tutoring, and ongoing challenges to their budget, Geno needed help. After being accepted into GRIT. He was able to cover all of the basic needs for his family. This support allowed Geno to breath which meant he could take a moment and focus on his family's future.

The support of GRIT dollars allowed Geno to pursue additional certifications at work that prepared him for a promotion. The increase allowed him to supplement his income and replace the \$500 he received when the program ended, stabilizing his family, improving his economic situation.

Last year, in partnership with WorkForce Central, we launched a healthcare apprenticeship program with an earn-and-learn model - paying participants so they can focus on learning without stressing about how to support their families.

This year I am proud to announce that we're building on its successes, because it's working.

- We have seen a 78% completion rate, which is incredibly high for this type of training.
- To date, 64% of participants have been placed in healthcare jobs, with more anticipated as we help graduates along their career-paths.

Now I want to tell you about a young woman who I'll call "Maria." Maria enrolled in our healthcare employment and apprenticeship program.

She had always been interested in changing careers to focus on healthcare, but the stipend she received as part of our program allowed her to fully focus on her training without having to juggle the demands of several jobs.

Now, Maria was also pregnant, and assumed that she could complete the program before the arrival of her baby - but as we all know, babies are on their own time... and the baby came four weeks early.

Maria worried about falling behind, while she took time to recover and care for her newborn. But the program's flexibility allowed her to pause her training, and eventually join another cohort to fulfill her clinical requirements, enabling her to graduate from the program alongside her classmates.

Maria is now back at work, fully employed as a registered nursing assistant, and is pursuing a career in the healthcare industry, that will allow her to establish a strong financial foundation for her family.

Hers is just one story about how this program is changing lives.

I am proud of programs like this because they help us prepare for the future. If the pandemic taught us anything, it's how much we depend on having adequate capacity in our healthcare system.

To that end, we have worked with the University of Washington Tacoma, to add up to 60 more seats in healthcare education programs each year, and continue to work together to advocate for additional support.

Another partner, Bates Technical College, opened its new Allied Health Building last year, growing and modernizing its capacity to give students a world-class, hands-on education.

Listen, livability is a value for us, not something we take for granted. How we frame our future adds up one climate initiative, one business innovation, and one living-wage job at a time.

With every challenge comes opportunity, and our city is rich with opportunities. It's worth feeling proud about. It's worth stepping up for. And it's worth lending our best efforts - together - toward building our best tomorrow.

Tacoma: YOU are why I serve.

You inspire me every day with your love and passion for our community. I see how hard you work to care for your family, friends, neighbors; to lift up those in need, build your businesses, and work with others across the community in support of a better Tacoma.

What you envision is the best Tacoma possible: A Tacoma that our children and their children will be deeply proud to call “Home.”

That’s what it means to Build Tomorrow Together.

Listen, I know I can seem overly optimistic when it comes to this city I love so much. But I see and feel the realities of the challenges we face.

I know we can successfully navigate through these challenges because we’ve done it before. But that doesn’t make them easier to live through right now.

Know that I, as your Mayor, am paying attention. I am right here with you, grappling with our shared reality, and I take my responsibility to drive solutions VERY seriously.

Although that road is long, and trust me it is very long, I continue to have hope. I *have to* have hope. What powers me each morning to rise are your calls for a better tomorrow.

My hope runs deep because Tacoma is a city full of powerful voices, ringing out with a vision so big it takes all of us to carry it forward.

My hope runs deep because among these powerful voices is a dedicated City Council, along with executive leadership, and the amazing front line employees committed to public service.

My hope runs deep because I know what this city is made of. I know what WE’RE made of. We’re solution-oriented, hardworking people, driven by a sincere desire to make Tacoma better. That’s why our best days are ahead of us.

THE STATE OF OUR CITY IS RISING - because we are building it - brick-by-brick and

block-by-block. We are rising up to capture opportunity and put it to purpose, helping us solve our greatest challenges.

So as we all reach for an ever-higher destiny, what I know about Tacoma is that when it comes to these critical issues, we overwhelmingly agree: Everyone deserves to feel safe, have an affordable place to call home, and enjoy the livability of this great city.

When we rise up together with the same goal in mind, the future we build is bright, and it is for everyone.

We have all the building blocks we need. So, this is my challenge to each of you.

- Let's build a tomorrow where everyone feels safe.
- Let's build a tomorrow where everyone can afford to have a roof over their head.
- Let's build a tomorrow where everyone has access to opportunity and well-paying careers.
- Let's build a tomorrow where we are resilient in the face of climate change.
- Let's build a tomorrow on the momentum of today.
- Let's build a tomorrow that starts *right here, right now*.
- And most importantly:
- **Let's BUILD TOMORROW TOGETHER.**

Thank you all, and good night.