

**Good morning, Tampa!**

**Let's hear it for the students from Booker T. Washington Elementary, Broward Elementary, and College Hill Preschool who did such a wonderful job in leading us in the pledge! And thank you to the talented students from Academy Prep who sang for us this morning.**

**What an exciting day this is for our city.**

**My deepest appreciation to everyone in attendance and those viewing from afar.**

**To our former Mayors, thank you for your tireless efforts in building Tampa into the great city it is today. I've always felt that our city has had the right mayor at the right time, and it is my hope that I can live up to that legacy.**

**To our City Council members, new and returning, we are tasked with working together to lift Tampa to greater heights. I look forward to what we're going to accomplish together.**

**As many of you know, the Undersecretary of Transportation visited Tampa some time back and when he asked what was the one thing other Mayors would want to take back to their cities from Tampa, I replied "The one thing that they can't have, our relationships". So, thank you to all current and former elected officials for the collaborative part that you have played in building our region.**

**In my experience, it is all about the team that you surround yourself with and we have an All Star Team at the City of Tampa. You all make me proud every day.**

**My family is the reason I am standing here today. All my love to my Mom, brothers and sister, my amazing sons Sergei and Seely, and of course my true partner Ana.**

**As I look across this room and see so many friends, neighbors and colleagues, I'm filled with a sense of optimism, hope and excitement about the direction Tampa is heading.**

**Here in Tampa, we are charting our own course into the future and we have chosen unity**

**We all know that Tampa is unique. We can see it, and we can feel it.**

**Our course embraces the politics of inclusion.**

**A course-- in which common sense and finding solutions-- drives us to work together, across party lines, across ideologies, across differences in backgrounds, in a city that is united, prosperous, resilient and determined to build a better future for all our residents.**

**Investing in connecting our communities and bringing Tampa together will be our focus over the next four years.**

**Connecting our neighborhoods.**

**Connecting our residents to opportunities.**

**Connecting our diverse population to one another.**

**The next four years will be about not only continuing to invest in the physical infrastructure- like roads, pipes, and housing that keep us resilient as a city, but investing in the infrastructure of people. Like the arts, parks and places that will continue to make Tampa thrive as a community.**

**The next four years will be about maintaining our identity as a friendly, welcoming city that embraces our diversity and differences as we grow with each passing day.**

**And they'll be about working together to tackle our greatest challenges, and coming together to celebrate our greatest successes.**

**To my friends on City Council... we have a lot of work to do together.**

**Tampa is growing rapidly and as you all know the secret is out.**

**We were just named one of Time Magazine's Greatest Places in the World for our live/work lifestyle. We were also named the #1 emerging tech hub by Forbes because of our growing and thriving tech ecosystem and emerging start-up culture.**

**Tampa's post-2020 recovery outpaced nearly every other city in the entire nation. While other cities are still struggling with empty office buildings and quiet downtowns, we have one of the lowest office vacancy rates in the nation. We are adding additional office space for those businesses that have and will continue to relocate to our community, and for our own home grown Tampa businesses. To keep pace with our City's rapid growth, we are adding thousands of new housing units in our urban core. Our airport, port and tourism industry, have all had a far faster recovery than other cities. Our restaurants are full, and there are ribbon-cuttings every day for new businesses.**

**Tampa's reputation as a friendly and welcoming city has made its way across the nation and globe, and that's to the credit of our residents who welcome newcomers with open arms into our community.**

**Tampa's become one of the most attractive places for people to relocate, and we've been ranked in the top five fastest-growing cities every year since 2019. Another interesting fact--We are one of the top cities in the nation and the only big city in Florida having a net migration of Gen-Z residents.**

**Tampa's growth is expected to continue. In 25 years, Tampa will be a city of 1.1 million residents. The surrounding area will grow by millions, with hundreds of thousands of new jobs and commuters coming into Tampa every day.**

**It's not just our growth that matters, but how we grow. The key to our success is protecting our quality of life, community spirit, diverse**

**culture and colorful history that makes Tampa special for today's residents- but also as we plan and prepare for Tampa's tomorrows.**

**It's about ensuring that families can experience generational wealth without being priced-out of the neighborhoods they grew up in, and that we experience inclusive prosperity anchored by a strong middle class.**

**The choices we make over the next four years will determine what attainable housing looks like, what transportation choices look like, and what economic opportunities look like for generations to come.**

### **TRANSPORTATION**

**When we talk about bringing Tampa together, there's nothing more critical than transforming our transportation system which will improve access to housing for people at all income levels, connect residents to better jobs, and connect people across our city to parks, concerts, and community events.**

**Following extensive public engagement in which we listened to and heard our diverse communities share their transportation priorities, our administration has completed a comprehensive, long range mobility master plan to move our city forward.**

**We will start by investing in maintenance, repaving our streets and fixing our sidewalks. We will add new sidewalks, bike lanes and crosswalks. We will focus on safety through Vision Zero quick build projects especially near schools and parks. And we will support a robust and effective transit system for the 30% of Tampa residents who are unable to drive or do not own a car and for those who choose to utilize public transportation.**

**To my friends on City Council, I say this: we are not waiting for a surtax to fix our roads, our sidewalks, to make our streets safer or provide mobility options. Transportation is our Achilles Heel. The time**

to act is now --by working together to address one of our city's greatest needs.

## **PARKS**

And while transportation connects places, places also connect people and bring them together. Places like our parks.

Over the next four years, we will work to implement our Parks & Recreation Master Plan that our administration has developed by working with neighborhoods across the city to better understand their wants and needs.

This Master Plan will ensure equitable access to park programs and facilities for our children, seniors and residents across this great city.

Facilities like the completion of the East Tampa Recreation Complex at Fair Oaks Park, Villa Brothers Park in West Tampa, Rivercrest Park in Seminole Heights, a new green space in Drew Park and of course additional Pickle Ball Courts.

And I am excited to announce today that, thanks to a \$1.4 million dollar federal grant, we will embark on an Early Childcare Initiative to help provide daycare to working moms, who were hit hardest by the pandemic. This initiative will start in the Grant & Orient Park neighborhoods.

## **ARTS & CULTURE**

We will also connect people to each other by renewing our focus on arts and culture.

From public art installations like the recently unveiled Soul Walk showcasing our diversity, to experiencing performing arts- like concerts and festivals in our public parks.

We will bring people together through our cultural assets that are the cornerstone to our community.

The arts not only add flavor and soul to our quality of life, but they are a crucial component in a stronger and more diversified economy-including workforce opportunities for the next generation.

But it's not just the art, it's the artists and musicians who call Tampa home, and that home needs to be affordable and attainable.

### **HOUSING/JOBS**

Connecting people to housing choices for all levels of income in every neighborhood is crucial.

The challenge is great because of our limited housing supply, a stunning demand and the high and rising cost of construction.

Our administration will continue to work with City Council, and our state and federal partners to address the long-term, systemic issues that make housing less affordable every day.

The city's role in housing affordability is focused on expanding homeownership opportunities, preventing evictions, partnering with developers to include more attainable housing in new projects, and establishing the conditions through transit corridors and land use reforms to increase density.

We must preserve our stock of attainable housing for future generations, which is why we have created a community land trust.

The path forward requires a better understanding of what our needs will be in the future and that's why we've embarked on an extensive housing needs assessment to help guide us in making our city a more affordable place to live, work and raise our families.

We are also working with City Council to revise Tampa's Comprehensive Plan to ensure that development happens in a smart and thoughtful way.

### **QUALITY OF LIFE**

**Now, let's talk about our quality of life.**

**Having a safe city is a prerequisite to everything else, and Tampa is the safest city our size in the nation. Most of Tampa's neighborhoods are safer than they've ever been.**

**Our administration will continue to focus on making every neighborhood safer for all of our residents.**

**Our first responders are on the front lines keeping us safe every day and we will ensure that TPD and Tampa Fire Rescue have the equipment and personnel needed to keep crime low and to address the growing number of medical rescue calls that we see across the city.**

**I am so proud of our men and women in uniform who keep us safe. Let's give TPD and Tampa Fire Rescue a round of applause!**

**We are also tackling homelessness in a compassionate yet effective way and TPD and our Housing Department will continue working together on our outreach program. We have expanded capacity at Tampa Hope- our shelter and wraparound services collaboration with Catholic Charities-to get more people off the streets and into housing.**

**There is nothing compassionate about camping in a park, panhandling or living in a bus shelter. Tampa Hope is a real success story that has placed over 20% of its clients in permanent housing and into gainful employment. This helps homeless individuals start anew while protecting the quality of life for all our residents, and I am so proud of what we accomplish each and every day.**

**And speaking of quality of life, keeping our city and waterways clean will be a top priority over the next four years.**

**Our litter skimmer is collecting thousands of pounds of litter from the Hillsborough River and the bay, but we are also stopping litter from**

getting into our waterways in the first place by putting nets over our storm drains.

And when it comes to our environment, it's warmer now than it has ever been in my lifetime, and we will see more 90 plus degree days year after year.

In the coming months, our administration will be releasing a comprehensive climate action plan that is the culmination of two years of research and community engagement on how best to mitigate climate change while reducing our impacts.

Our tree canopy is a very important part of this and is a treasure that we must preserve. It serves as so much more than just aesthetics: it plays a crucial role in our stormwater system AND mitigates heat.

That's why, with the support of our Sustainability and resilience office, I'm excited to announce that we will be planting over 30,000 trees by 2030 to strengthen and preserve our tree canopy.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is a great honor and privilege to serve as Tampa's Mayor during this watershed moment in our history.

All of us who have taken the oath of office this morning have been given the public's trust to work hard and act in the best interest of our city. The actions we take today will profoundly impact the quality of life of our residents now and for years to come.

The challenges and opportunities facing this city are too great for city government alone. Reaching Tampa's true potential will take each of us, stepping-up, volunteering, doing what we can.

Neighborhood clean-ups. Planting trees. Beautification projects. Big Brothers Big Sisters. The United Way. Arts and cultural organizations. The opportunities to make a difference are endless.



**It puts everything into perspective when you consider that our master plans for transportation, climate change, parks and recreation, housing, and land use are all long term initiatives, and that the children here today will be among the city's leaders when these plans are fully implemented.**

**That they will be future business owners, artists, city council members, homeowners, neighborhood leaders and nonprofit board members.**

**That they will be walking on sidewalks we built and relaxing in the shade beneath trees that we planted.**

**In a city more united, more diverse, stronger and more prosperous, more equitable and more resilient because of the work that the Tampa of today did with the Tampa of tomorrow in mind.**

**And for all of us here today, this is a legacy worth striving for.**