

## **WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER!**

### **Welcome**

Thank you all for joining us. I want to acknowledge and thank the Vice Mayor, my City Council colleagues—both past and present, and our City employees who each day provide exemplary service to Pasadena residents, businesses and visitors. Thank you to Pasadena City College, President Erika Endrijonas, the P.C.C. Trustees, faculty, staff, and students. A special thank you to Emmanuel Gomez, Associated Students President.

We are fortunate that Cynthia Kurtz is currently serving as Interim City Manager. When Pasadena needed her most, Cynthia stepped up to assist us through one of the most difficult times in the City's history. Thank you, Cynthia.

Thank you to all of you for the honor and privilege of serving as your Mayor. As someone who arrived in this City as a monolingual, Spanish speaking 5-year old, I am proud to say that I serve as Mayor of Pasadena. Thank you for that honor and privilege.

With this opportunity comes the sacrifice of time with my wonderful wife, Kelly, and my children Michael and Emma; I thank them from the bottom of my heart for their unwavering support and love. Please stand and say hello.

In 2021, our theme for this State of the City was *A Time Like No Other!* At this time last year, along with the rest of the world we struggled in every aspect of our lives: personal, professional, financial, health, and family—with little end in sight. Vaccines were just being rolled out, we communicated primarily via Zoom, and we watched as many of our neighbors struggled and mourned for loved ones. At that time, I said that by working together, Pasadena would come out stronger than when we entered the pandemic. One year later, we have proven that Pasadena *is* resilient and *We Are Stronger Together!*

In no way am I suggesting that the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic are completely behind us, as there will always be more trials. What I do believe is that we can—and we will—overcome future hardships not by pulling apart, but by coming together as a community, just as we did when facing *A Time Like No Other!*

Be it violence on our streets, financial constraints or a global pandemic, 2021 proved to us all that *We Are Stronger Together!*

Let me provide a brief update on status of our great City.

### **The Pandemic**

First, our hearts go out to those who have succumbed to COVID-19, those debilitated by it, and of course, their loved ones and friends. Let us observe a brief moment of silence for all of those affected by the pandemic.

Our thoughts are also with the incredible frontline healthcare workers in our community that put in lengthy shifts at facilities teeming with patients, and treat each patient as though they are family.

The Pasadena Health Department, headed by Dr. Goh, has led the charge and provided guidance on how to manage the pandemic safely. As a result, Pasadena is leading the way back:

99.1% of all residents have received at least one vaccine dose, and 92.1% of all eligible residents are fully vaccinated.

Our Health Department also provided technical assistance to our schools and business community, which allowed us to bounce back better and stronger. All of this occurred—mind you—parallel to the “routine” and ongoing work of the Health Department, which continued unabated, and that is no small accomplishment! Pasadena is one of only four cities in California with its own Health Department, and is an asset that we should always strive to support.

Congratulations to Dr. Goh and the many partners, such as Huntington Hospital, Day One, NAACP, and the Pasadena Community Job Center, who assisted, and kudos to residents that received the vaccine. While many throughout the country quarreled about the jab, we proved *We Are Stronger Together* by collaboratively working to protect our health and that of our neighbors.

Finally, on the issue of COVID-19, we must keep in mind the mental health impacts wrought by this global experience. I am convinced the pandemic has seared a change in us all—in every aspect of our lives—and we must recognize the effect it has had on the mental health of those most vulnerable, including children and seniors. I am inviting the County’s Director of Mental Health to attend a Council meeting to address this issue and make clear the County’s strategy to assist the City and its residents as we grapple with the important issue of mental health.

### **Housing Task Force**

I would like to thank my friend and former Mayor, Bill Bogaard, for his service as Chair of the Housing Task Force. With the advice and guidance of another former Mayor, Rick Cole, who serves as my Housing Advisor, the Task Force has accomplished significant work in 2021.

The 17-member group, working with our Planning & Development and Housing Departments, conducted nine meetings in 2021 and guided two Housing Element submittals to the State, which included stronger policies related to the production of affordable housing. The Task Force will work with City staff on any final revisions prior to Council adoption of the Housing Element later this year, and is also working on ways to both maintain our current affordable housing stock and increase production of much-needed new housing.

In the coming months, the Task Force will focus its work on the adaptive reuse of commercial buildings, building on the success of the City’s Accessory Dwelling Unit program, prioritization of housing on public land, and investigating alternative finance structures for affordable housing production.

### **Affordable Housing**

Much like the entire State, affordable housing remains a challenge in Pasadena. The high cost of housing and effects of the pandemic have significantly impacted lower and middle income households, and our Housing Department is committed to creatively and collaboratively addressing these challenges.

I am pleased to report, this past year, a new Accessory Dwelling Unit program was rolled out, nearly 1,000 luxury apartment units were acquired for low and moderate income rental housing, construction began on over 500 units of affordable housing (including the Salvation Army’s Hope Center, a very much needed 64-unit permanent supportive housing development), 184 new rental vouchers were secured to provide permanent supportive housing to community members, and over 200 persons experiencing homelessness were provided motel vouchers. Another 500 units are awaiting full funding, including two critically needed permanent supportive housing projects for persons experiencing chronic homelessness. We also worked with our community partners to assist low-income and vulnerable households to apply for State emergency rental assistance.

## **The Rose Bowl is back!**

The Rose Bowl Stadium, also known as America's Stadium, is a National Historic Landmark that has faced adversity in the last several years. While a global pandemic threatened its livelihood and existence, Stadium staff creatively pivoted and found new ways of entertaining the community and generating income to remain viable.

The Stadium became the number one drive-in location for entertainment in Southern California and served as a COVID testing site during the height of the pandemic, performing over 9,500 tests for Pasadena residents and essential workers, while other venues of its size remained dormant.

A top priority of the Stadium has been giving back to the local community, and that was no different during the pandemic. The Rose Bowl Legacy Foundation raised funds to provide 75,000 meals to PUSD families, the Stadium hosted local high school graduations when only outdoor large-gathering activities were permitted, and became the home football Stadium to both Pasadena High School and John Muir High School.

The Rose Bowl has endured arduous times and we still need to tackle a structural deficit in the years ahead, but with Legacy Foundation leadership, support of donors and bestowing of federal grants, and by attracting more events, its financial position has improved by more than \$25 million in the past nine months. The Rose Bowl is just months shy of turning 100-years old, and our collective goal is to launch the Rose Bowl into its next 100 years. I am confident that in those next 100 years the Rose Bowl will transition from America's Stadium to the World's Stadium.

The Centennial Celebration is a story of perseverance, and Rose Bowl staff continue to raise the bar with new event models, creative thinking and maintaining community outreach at its core. Keeping traditions alive and continuing to reinvest in our iconic venue will ensure the Rose Bowl sees the next 100 years of history.

## **Libraries**

While navigating the spread of the virus, we found our routines and daily activities upended, disrupted or discontinued, schools and businesses shuttered their doors, and we physically distanced ourselves from others. What succeeded in bringing down the walls that separated us? Our Public Library.

Our library system brought us back together through virtual programs that greeted over 49,000 attendees, and welcomed an increase in website hits that exceeded 430,000 visitors. Over 38,000 research sessions were conducted on our Library databases, more than 3,000 individuals obtained a new library card, and dedicated library staff kept us informed, educated and entertained with the circulation of nearly 615,000 books, DVDs and other collections.

Although our Central Library remains closed due to structural vulnerability, you can be sure it will reopen again once the full assessment, mitigation plan and seismic retrofit is complete. We have already embarked on a process to re-envision the Central Library, and have received \$4 million from the State to help rehabilitate this civic jewel.

Steeped in history with over a century of archived collections, our Library is also a contemporary, forward-looking establishment offering a wide variety of programs including robotics, computer coding, 3-D printing, and a hands-on lab for tinkering, designing and creating. Our Library now lends out free Chromebooks and free hotspots for Wi-Fi access, regardless of need, thanks to our Friends of the Library and Foundation.

Neil Gaiman, a popular English author once said: “*Google can bring you back 100,000 answers. A LIBRARIAN can bring you back the right one.*” No doubt he was talking about our Pasadena librarians!

## **Fire and Police Departments**

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Pasadena Fire and Police Departments who, in the most difficult of circumstances, continued to report to work and respond to service calls.

During the last year, the Fire Department responded to over 17,000 emergency calls for service, of which nearly 3,200 were fire-related, and a little over 13,000 were medical-related. The Department assisted in 16 statewide mutual aid incidents during the second half of 2021, implemented a Professional Standards Unit, and the Department’s vacancy rate is the lowest it has been in 15 years.

Our Police Department’s Dispatch Center responded to 235,000 calls; 62,000 of which were to 911, and 115,000 calls for service. The PD made nearly 3,000 homeless outreach efforts, and removed 336 firearms from our streets.

Thank you to our Chiefs, and to the brave men and women of the Pasadena Fire and Police Departments. Also, as members of the City’s Public Safety Committee, thank you Councilmembers Hampton, Kennedy and Madison for your dedicated efforts in reviewing matters relating to police and fire services and guiding our Police and Fire Departments.

## **City’s Finances**

Along with health impacts, the pandemic brought unprecedented financial challenges not only to residents and businesses, but to City’s coffers as well.

Although some industries are still challenged by the pandemic, such as travel, hotel and retail—including the City’s convention center and Stadium—the overall financial picture for Pasadena is trending in the right direction. Since property tax is the City’s largest revenue source, the strong real estate market has provided resiliency to the City’s General Fund. Sales tax and Measure I tax revenue has also realized strong results. The auto sales industry has done very well over the past two years, and collection of both sales tax and Measure I on most online sales has been a saving grace. The flexibility of Measure I revenue has allowed Pasadena to maintain critical services. This saving grace has also allowed us to provide much needed financial support to our Pasadena Unified School District through Measure J.

While the overall picture is positive, the City’s financial forecast will continue to be challenged as some key revenues and related industries will take several years to recover. For example, the travel industry is expecting a slow recovery and will not return to pre-pandemic levels until 2025. Business travel (the sector that brings the majority of travelers to Pasadena during the week) is also of particular interest.

Inflation, the Consumer Price Index and the Producer Price Index all have tremendous impact on the City’s costs in all sectors. Under the guidance of the Finance Committee—that includes Councilmember Williams, Councilmember Kennedy, Vice Mayor Wilson—the City will continue to watch national and global economic forecasts as Pasadena’s revenues and expenditures are affected.

## **Pasadena continues to attract investment**

We anticipate the Constance Hotel to re-open under new ownership this coming May and, while we cannot yet announce the brand, you can expect this property will enhance our Pasadena brand.

Adding to Pasadena's reputation as a center for innovation is the arrival of Motiv Space Systems, designers and builders of robotic arms, motor controllers and mechanisms for space agencies such as NASA and JPL, and Miso Robotics, a developer of artificial intelligence-driven robots to assist chefs in food preparation.

We are also welcoming a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company to Pasadena, Xencor, which is developing engineered monoclonal antibodies and proteins to combat cancer and autoimmune diseases.

We should all be electrified by the arrival of Lucid Motors to Pasadena—an electric vehicle manufacturer known for designing the longest range, fastest charging electric car.

Plus, in the summer of 2023 we expect Erewhon Market to bring new energy and niche, locally-produced, organic food to South Lake Avenue at the site of the former Borders Bookstore.

## **Stronger Together in 2022: A Glimpse Forward**

### **Early Child Development and Early Learning**

When crises occur, child development does not stop. As such, it is imperative that our young children and their families receive critical resources to survive this pandemic, and to thrive in the years beyond it.

Eight years ago our former PUSD Superintendent, Dr. Vera Vignes, led the effort to develop our Early Child Development Policy and Master Plan for the Young Child, which unites programs and services to improve the lives of children ages birth to five in our community. The City established the Office of the Young Child in 2016 to carry out this important work, and as we now find ourselves challenged by the impacts of the pandemic, racial injustice, cycles of violence, and economic instability, I am concerned with how our youngest children and their families are doing.

To this end, I am recommending formation of a Task Force that will work with City staff to review the current implementation of our Early Child Development policy and recommend a path forward to ensure support of our young children. Task Force members will represent a broad cross-section of Early Childhood experts, community advocates, leaders in Public Health, and parents from across Pasadena representing diverse parental needs. The Task Force will provide its first update to the City Council by June of this year.

### **Vocational Training Opportunities for Youth**

In 1970, less than 8% of Americans age 25 and older possessed a college degree. While today that number is nearly 37%, we must do more for the remaining 60+ percent. Together with my Council colleagues, I am committed to increasing available pathways to success for Pasadena residents, particularly those deciding that college is not their first or chosen path.

Far too often I see young people miss opportunities to develop their interest in vocational fields such as plumbing, electrical, carpentry, or ironwork; fields that can lead to rewarding and good paying careers. I also hear from potential employers that struggle to find well-trained and reliable workers in

those same fields. It our responsibility to become *Stronger Together* by helping to address that disconnect.

To bring City resources, PCC, PUSD, and our Labor partners together, I've asked Doug Kranwinkle to work with an ad hoc committee of the City Council—Councilmembers Hampton, Rivas and Kennedy—to spearhead an effort to increase vocational training opportunities for young people in Pasadena, and you can expect to hear more about this effort in the coming weeks.

### **Relinquishment and Re-imagining the 710 Corridor**

I am happy to report that this past year we worked diligently to bring the 710 corridor back to its rightful owner: the residents of Pasadena. With successful completion of the Technical Feasibility Analysis in 2021, we have now initiated the process for Caltrans' relinquishment of the SR 710 northern stub to Pasadena. Thank you to Councilmember Steve Madison for ensuring the City moved swiftly, and for providing guidance moving forward.

Once the relinquishment process is complete, the next challenge is to reimagine this portion of our City. The corridor is not only an important gateway to West Pasadena, but also to Old Pasadena and to Huntington Hospital for ambulances and first responders, not to mention an important traffic corridor for our City.

As we look to re-stitch our City and reimagine the possibilities of receiving land not considered in a few generations, this is a great opportunity to engage in a public and transparent process. Land is valuable because nobody is making any more of it, so we have a tremendous responsibility to get this right. I look forward to the re-visioning and planning process that will soon be underway.

### **Pasadena's Utility**

Pasadena's Department of Water and Power has always been a leader. As many of you know, PWP was one of the original founders of the Metropolitan Water District, which has played one of the most important roles in the evolution of all of Southern California.

Last year PWP provided \$2.74 million in rebates and services for conservation and sustainability programs and, by working closely with Pasadena residents, was able to cumulatively reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 57% compared to 1990 levels.

Under the guidance of Vice Mayor Andy Wilson, Chair of the Municipal Services Committee, PWP continues to lead by expanding its electrification efforts with several Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure expansion projects. Most notable is the recently opened Arroyo EV Charging Depot, Pasadena's second joint project with Tesla. Charging stations are conveniently located close to the 110 Freeway, which is travelled by a large number of commuters in the greater LA area each day, and features 26 of the latest generation high power chargers to accommodate the larger battery EVs of today and the future.

### **Revamped Budget Process**

For some time I have advocated for a revamped budget process. The current process involves a series of budget hearings before the Finance Committee in conjunction with City Council where Departments are afforded a brief period to present an outline of their budget, the Finance Committee selects a department or issue or two to dig into, and recommends approval of an \$892 million budget to the full City Council. I believe this is a rushed process that does not allow for a deep dive into budget priorities. We can do better. We can make our budget process *Stronger Together*.

With the advice and consent of our City Manager, this year's process will be different; Council Committees with subject matter responsibility over a department will review respective budgets and be able to dig into their programs. For example, the Public Safety Committee will review Police and Fire Department budgets, and the Municipal Services Committee will review the Pasadena Water and Power budget.

It is my hope that this new process will allow for improved oversight by Pasadena's elected officials of precious City dollars and resources, and provide the public a better opportunity to review not only budgetary numbers, but also the effectiveness and efficiency of our programs and related expenditures.

### **Search for the second-best City Manager**

Again, thank you to Cynthia Kurtz for answering the call when our City needed you. I've joked with people that I don't understand why we're in a hurry to find the second-best City Manager when we already have the best in Cynthia. So, unless we can convince Cynthia to extend her contract a few years—hint, hint—we'll see the arrival of a new City Manager this calendar year.

We have retained a consultant and are now proceeding to solicit applicants. Selecting our chief executive is the most important decision the Council will make in the coming months, and I've appointed an ad hoc committee of the City Council to guide the process along.

In conclusion, let me re-emphasize that, while we have much to improve and much work to do, today Pasadena is *Stronger Together* because we have worked and grown together during the most difficult of times. Be assured that your City Council is committed to continuing to build our community, and hopefully next year's theme will be recovery and moving forward from the pandemic, together.

I am humbled and grateful to serve as your Mayor, and I thank you again for that honor and privilege.