



**Full Text of Mayor Romero's State-of-the-City Speech:
December 2, 2021.**

Good afternoon everyone! Thank you for joining us for this year's State of the City. I am so happy to be here with you today.

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge everyone who has made this event possible. A particular thanks to my staff at the Mayor's Office, staff at the Tucson Metro Chamber, Visit Tucson, today's title sponsors: United Health Care and Cox Communications, as well as, Desert Diamond Casino.

Welcome to all of the elected officials in attendance.

A very special recognition to our City of Gastronomy certified chefs and artisans:

- Mateo Otero of Rollie's Mexican Patio
- Todd and Sherry Martin of Tucson Tamale Company
- Maryia Miles from San Xavier Cooperative Farm Catering Program
- Don Guerra at Barrio Bread
- Janos Wilder of The Carriage House
- Carlotta Flores of El Charro and Carlotta's Kitchen, The Franco Family of La Estrella Bakeries

who are celebrating our local food and heritage by collaborating with Chef Greg Cara and Chef Rene Bernal of the TCC to create our special menu today.

A big round of applause for all of them.

My heartfelt appreciation to Rio Nuevo for their partnership and investment in the TCC.

And, to the event staff at TCC, the workers serving our food and all who have supported our vision and collaborated to make this event a success.

Two years ago, I was sworn into office as the Mayor of our beloved city. Little did we know that within a few months, we would be called to deal with a global pandemic that upended every aspect of our lives. The pandemic would fundamentally reshape all sectors of our economy, including City government, which would be called to serve the people of Tucson in unprecedented ways.

This Mayor and Council have been leaders in our response to the pandemic, taking action and making difficult decisions at every turn, with the specific intent to follow the science and protect EVERY SINGLE Tucson resident.

I would like to acknowledge the support and solidarity of my colleagues on the Council as we navigated these uncharted waters: Council Members Lane Santa Cruz, Paul Cunningham, Karin Uhlich, Nikki Lee, Richard Fimbres and Steve Kozachik, as well as,



City Manager Ortega, City Attorney Rankin and all of the City of Tucson employees.

This past year, the City of Tucson, in partnership with Pima County, vaccinated approximately 90,000 people here at the TCC. Next week, we will re-open this clinic, as we continue to address this ongoing community need.

Thank you to Chief Ryan, Dr. Cullen, and all of the employees who helped us stand up this COVID-19 vaccination clinic.

This year, we took the difficult, yet important step, to mandate our City employees be vaccinated to protect our residents and each other.

This action led the way in our state. Other cities in Arizona have since followed. I am proud of our Council and of the City Staff for working together to blaze this trail.

Cases in Arizona are still rising, so we must remain vigilant. Public health experts recommend getting vaccinated, boosted, and continuing to use mitigation strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and its variants.

Our understanding of this pandemic and ways to keep ourselves and each other safe has grown since the early days in 2020.

My sincere appreciation to Pima County for making sure vaccines, boosters, and tests are readily available, in an easily accessible way, at low to no cost. Together, our community is making incredible strides to emerge from this crisis.

Although important, our pandemic response is only one part of the significant work we have undertaken in 2021.

Thanks to our Senators and Congressional delegation, Tucson received \$67M of the American Rescue Plan dollars.

These dollars were intended to usher in transformative change. I have worked with Council Members Uhlich and Santa Cruz, to develop a framework to be used to inform our decision-making.

We are using an equity lens to strategically invest in programs, services and infrastructure that will help us along our path to full recovery in a way that will make a difference in the quality of life for EVERY SINGLE Tucsonan.

The entire Council worked with me to polish this framework that combines our vision with our resources to create meaningful, long-lasting change.

Our investment of ARP dollars will stabilize affordable housing, prevent crime through violence interruption programs and invest in historically disenfranchised communities.



We are prioritizing providing relief for families, those who were hardest hit by COVID, essential and frontline workers and small businesses.

We are investing funds in our neighborhoods, youth employment, mental and behavioral health support, implementing climate resilient strategies, expanding our services to seniors and teens, transitional workforce development for veterans and people re-entering society after incarceration.

We are putting money towards digital literacy and cyber security as well as a top priority: affordable housing.

Mayor and Council will invest \$67M this first year and plan to invest another \$67M next year. We are charting our course to creating the equitable, sustainable, inclusive Tucson we can be.

So, dream along with me.

Imagine the Tucson we want for ourselves, our kids, our grandkids, our next seven generations.

We live in one of the most beautiful places in the world: blue skies, majestic mountains, heritage and culture spanning thousands of years.

We know that in the next decade we can create the thriving Tucson of our dreams. The way we get there is by mapping our route.

One of my priorities this year has been to facilitate the creation of strategic plans that solicit community input, collaboration, visioning, and most importantly, direction as we navigate into the future.

Working in partnership with the strong leadership of Department Directors, we have completed strategic plans for:

- our transportation and mobility future through MOVE TUCSON and
- Housing Affordability for Tucson

We are crafting strategic plans for:

- Economic Development
- Art, History, Heritage and Culture and
- Climate Action.

These are 21st century action plans to get us to the future we deserve reflecting the wishes and needs of Tucsonans.



Imagine Tucson as THE sustainable, economically vibrant, progressive city of the future.

We must lead on issues that are important to all of our residents, to our state, to our nation, and, in fact, to the global community. We must lead on climate change.

Tucson is the third fastest warming city in the country. We know we are on the frontlines of the fight against climate change.

That's why I led my Council to declare a climate emergency in September 2020. Since then, we have continued to develop our vision and actions as we move towards becoming a Carbon Neutral community by 2030.

In 2021, I launched Tucson Million Trees - a nature-based initiative to reduce the urban heat island effect, especially in our most vulnerable communities.

To date, and in partnership, with Trees for Tucson, we have planted or distributed nearly 39,000 low water use trees in heat vulnerable communities across Tucson.

To water these trees, our Green Stormwater Infrastructure program captures, retains, and filters stormwater in order to create more climate resilient spaces.

Working collaboratively with our private partners, I secured donations totaling over \$400,000 to increase our tree planting efforts in 2022.

I'd like to thank: Swire Coca-Cola, Tucson Electric Power, Mister Car Wash, the Arbor Day Foundation, the Tucson Parks Foundation and Kinder Morgan for their generous contributions.

In order to get to a net zero waste city by 2050, Environmental Services Director, Carlos De La Torre is helping us re-imagine how we view our landfill. What used to be considered a dump, is now viewed as an asset. At the Los Reales Sustainability Campus, we will grow trees, use methane gas as a resource, compost, and foster the innovation necessary to lead in this sector.

I've worked with my colleagues on the Council and our City staff to implement the Electric Vehicle Readiness Roadmap that will accelerate the adoption of EVs not just for city government; but, to construct an EV grid throughout the entire Tucson community in partnership with the private sector.

This is an important step to take in order to be best prepared to compete for federal infrastructure dollars. Creating a climate resilient city is important to all Tucsonans and an important driver of our economic development.



Green jobs are critical to our economic future. It is estimated that the green economy creates 9.5 million full-time jobs and generates 1.3 trillion dollars in annual sales revenue in the United States.

In 2021, we worked with TuSimple to expand their operations in Tucson, adding another 75 jobs developing and testing autonomous vehicle technology intended to increase the safety and efficiency of interstate commerce. This is an emerging sector and Tucson is positioned to be a leader.

Additionally, CIS Global, now nVent, expanded their operations in Tucson, adding nearly 100 new jobs manufacturing metal components, some of which are used in the renewable energy industry.

I was so proud to represent Tucson at the White House Infrastructure and Jobs Act signing ceremony with President Biden, Vice President Harris, his Cabinet, Congressional Leaders and 39 other Mayors.

I've been working diligently throughout the past year engaging with the Biden-Harris Administration to keep Tucson on their radar.

Just yesterday, I received a call from Mitch Landrieu, the White House Federal Infrastructure Czar. While speaking, he made clear that Tucson and Southern Arizona are important to the President.

I was happy to report The City of Tucson IS READY to receive federal infrastructure dollars.

I am also prepared to work with our tribal and regional partners, and our state, to make sure Southern Arizona receives both formula funding and competitive dollars to take full advantage of this historic opportunity.

Our focus on climate resiliency, equity, and intention to create high-wage, long-term union jobs are KEY to bringing those Federal dollars to Southern Arizona.

We have already proven we are able to deliver on voter approved propositions.

Thanks to Proposition 101, the City of Tucson has repaved 268 lane miles of arterial, collector and residential streets and invested more than \$50M dollars in this effort.

Thanks to Proposition 407, we have completed a remodel of Fire Station 11, and are actively reconstructing Fire Stations 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, and 18.

We have built new playgrounds, walking paths, pickleball courts, and added six mobile recreation vans to our Parks and Recreation services.



As we all know, finding an affordable place to live in Tucson has become an increasingly difficult task.

In August, Mayor and Council directed the Department of Housing and Community Development, led by Liz Morales, to craft a strategic plan that comprehensively lays out the path ahead.

Recently, my colleagues and I voted to approve the ordinance that will launch the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units.

This is an important step in addressing our affordable housing crisis, disrupting systemic racism, and helping to keep more people in their homes while contributing to building generational wealth and stability for families.

In addition, we've requested Planning and Development Services to amend our Commercial Parking Code to allow parking reductions if they include affordable housing.

We have also passed ordinances to incentivize planning and overlay zoning on transit corridors.

Our team is intentional about putting equity and justice at the forefront of housing, climate, economic development and now...community safety, health and wellness.

This past week has reminded us of the challenges of delivering public safety to our residents. Last Spring, we took the bold step of re-imagining what community safety can be.

My team worked with Liana Perez, our Deputy City Manager, to develop our Community Safety, Health and Wellness program.

Today, we are at the leading edge of developing a comprehensive program to coordinate services the City of Tucson provides to its residents as well as partnering with non-profit and other community organizations to take on these issues holistically.

We know that to create a vibrant and robust community, we must address the root causes of violence and crime: poverty, historic disinvestment and lack of economic opportunity.

During 30 listening sessions conducted with city staff and community partners, we identified service gaps as well as highlighted the programs that were already providing invaluable services.

An example is our 911 Communications teams, led by Interim Director, Chad Kasmar, who fields nearly 1500 calls per day. So, they are on pace to process over 600,000 calls during 2021, a 5% increase over last year.



Our Housing and Community Development Department housed more than a thousand people in our hotel program and placed 78% in permanent housing as part of our Housing First initiative.

Tucson Police Chief Magnus, and Assistant Chief Hall introduced an innovative program designed to reduce violent crime, particularly those committed with guns, through the Place Networks Investigation Project. Their analysis identified three sites to use as pilots to disrupt violent crimes.

I am happy to report that under the umbrella of Community Safety, Health and Wellness, we are in the process of hiring a Program Director to lead this program.

We have hired a Housing First Director to coordinate providing low or no barrier permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness with wrap-around services including mental health support.

We have hired a Data Analyst at 911 Communications to help us collect and analyze the types of calls that are being received and to identify possibilities to redirect those calls to other services and programs.

So far in 2021, Tucson Collaborative Community Care, better known as TC3, a partnership with Tucson Medical Center, has served 384 clients reducing the 911 calls of those clients by 84%.

These decisions, alone, will help alleviate call loads on our police officers and firefighters.

As we move into 2022, we will expand this program to include social workers, community safety officers, additional support to our police auditor, community outreach coordinators, crisis counselors, and navigators.

Over the past 12 months, under my leadership, and with the support of my Council, the Community Safety, Health and Wellness Program has moved from an idea to a program we are ready to implement.

Has anyone heard of Duster and HBO filming in Tucson? Well, yes it's true! I have some great news to share.

The State, the County, the City, Visit Tucson and Rio Nuevo all held hands, contributing what we each have to offer, and look at the amazing results!

HBO just finished 28 days of filming with a local impact of 673 jobs, nearly 10,000 hotel room nights filled and \$8.4M dollars in economic impact to our region..

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Working together, we will achieve the just, equitable future we envision, where EVERY SINGLE TUCSONAN can live their best lives in our thriving, resilient city.

Our natural beauty, history, heritage and culture provide our foundation. With our strategic plans in hand, a Mayor and Council ready to act, we are prepared to step into our collective future.

To that end, I will close today by unveiling our new City of Tucson logo.

This logo reflects the modern, resilient, sustainable city that respects its past and looks into its future.

We Are One - Somos Unos Tucson