



KANSAS CITY
MISSOURI

QUINTON D. LUCAS
Mayor

February 12, 2020

Good evening, Kansas City. Thank you for being here with us tonight for the first State of the City Address for a new mayor and Council. In the past six months, we have had some amazing successes—reforms for how we can address crime; increasing mobility through public transportation; and a tenants’ bill of rights—while we continue to confront our longstanding challenges like deferred maintenance and gun violence. Today we recognize our progress and the paths of progress upon which we must continue.

Before we begin, I want to thank my friends—the Yellowjackets of Center High School and the Center School District—for welcoming all of us to south Kansas City this evening. Fourteen school districts serve Kansas City’s young people. All are special, all deal with more issues than we can imagine—ranging from mid-year student mobility to mental health and trauma challenges for our youngest—and we at City Hall stand ready to support you as you build our future leaders.

Six months into our terms, we have much to celebrate, nothing gaining more notoriety than Kansas City’s first Super Bowl win in fifty years. Imagine what we can do over the next three and a half years.

But, as we continue to celebrate our players on the gridiron, I want to look at the last several weeks as a reflection on what we can do so well as a local government. As Washington and Jefferson City fight, we at City Hall have the opportunity to show how to deliver services, how to lead, and how to remove barriers to success for those traditionally left behind in our community.

I truly believe in local government. Local government at its best is what we do and what we owe to our residents.

As Kansas Citians—myself included—jumped with joy during the final minutes of the Super Bowl, our city staff got to work. Public Works employees hung hundreds of banners, cleared routes, and erected barricades; our police department and partner agencies organized security within days to host hundreds of thousands of revelers; our fire department organized disaster response; and our Solid Waste Division returned one of the greatest lawns in our city to its prior state after it hosted one of the largest parties in our city’s history. Our staff won’t get bonuses or large ovations on television, but let’s take a moment to recognize all those unsung heroes of the past several weeks who helped Kansas City shine on a cold winter Wednesday. And let’s take a moment to recognize the fact that this diligent, courageous, hard work is what they deliver to our constituents every day.

The dedication of our staff was particularly exemplified by the quick thinking of officers from the Kansas City Police Department and partner agencies, including the Clay County Sheriff’s Office and the Independence Police Department. When a drug-addled driver entered the parade route, the calm, measured, and rapid response of law enforcement led to a safe conclusion for parade-goers and the suspect. As he should, the driver tonight sits in the Jackson County Jail, but luckily for him, without injury. An outcome like this isn’t happenstance; it’s due to outstanding work by officers like Kansas City Police Major Scott Caron and Captain Tim Gaughan, career officers with KCPD, who join us here tonight. Let’s thank them.

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I mention them to herald not just their heroism, but to highlight what police in our city, our community, and our country do right. We often hear stories about what went wrong in policing. Kansas City once again, as often happens, is an example of what's being done right. We thank them and all of their sisters and brothers in law enforcement and appreciate them being here with us tonight.

Those of you that have been around for a while will recall that the State of the City address is typically delivered in March. We decided to move the State of the City up this year, just one day ahead of our budget introduction, so we could preview and clearly define for Kansas City the issues we're prioritizing in the upcoming fiscal year. As we all have seen and witnessed, Kansas City has much to celebrate. Winners on the field, outstanding neighborhoods, and continuing population growth, particularly north of the river . . . but we all know and recognize that we have much more work to do—to build a more equitable city; to deliver on the basic services promises that our residents deserve; and to make Kansas City a safer place to live and an easier place to get around.

Part of building an equitable city includes ensuring that we have a city where our failed infrastructure doesn't lead to blown out car tires or damaged hubcaps or injuries to cyclists that may cost hundreds, even thousands, of dollars that are taken out of a family budget or may keep Kansas Citians from work. Or, perhaps, even creates a threat to someone's safety. I have a colleague who once noted potholes are not an act of God. She's right. Instead they're often the result of poor choices, poor luck, and in too many cases on the City's part, poor planning.

Our road maintenance problem, however, is not new to us. Last spring, the City Council unanimously passed a resolution directing then-City Manager Schulte to lay out a five-year comprehensive maintenance plan for our roads, but as too often happens, the weather improved, the roads got a bit better, and as we reviewed our GO bond and capital improvement priorities, the more and more the mundane street maintenance priority slid further down the list.

Colleagues, we cannot keep kicking the can down the potholed road. In 2017, we went to voters with a general obligation bond initiative and correlating property tax increase to repair and fix existing infrastructure in each of our districts, generating almost \$40 million per year. In 2018, voters renewed a one-cent sales tax for capital improvements, generating up to \$70 million per year. Both taxes passed with three-quarters support because our voters were telling us, time and again: we need to take care of what we've got. Let's commit to that, then.

This year's budget will include an increase in our street-resurfacing fund to \$17 million, a seventy percent, 7-0 percent, increase from the funding level two years ago for street resurfacing. And while we resurface, let's use techniques that produce later cost-savings: complete streets infrastructure to support those walking or biking on our roads; coordination with utilities—including the one we run, KC Water—to ensure we're not creating new road maintenance concerns shortly after rebuilding our streets, as is the case now on 75th Street just a short drive from here. And, as we look at road spending priorities from each of our districts, I encourage us to prioritize existing troubled arterials like Gregory, rather than new expansion projects that exist in each of our districts—like 22nd Street between the Paseo and Brooklyn through my own home district.

To help us address our problems and implement actual solutions, I have asked Acting City Manager Earnest Rouse to appoint a position I have dubbed the "Pothole Czar." This position recognizes that implementation and how we prioritize our finite funding has been as much of a problem in street maintenance as total allocated resources have been.

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In some cases, streets with decades of neglect continue to be ignored, while in other situations newly repaved streets feature new maintenance problems due to utility repairs leading to deteriorating road conditions. We're not doing enough preventative maintenance to stop problems before they get bad enough to require emergency repairs.

Thus, our pothole czar should look to the following:

- Better prioritization of our road projects to address existing infrastructure challenges and to incorporate our complete streets priorities in these projects;
- Better coordination across departments and with our utilities;
- Better reporting measures so that the public can report a failed road and see a response from the city in short order;
- And, consistent reporting to City Council, so that as we consider our funding priorities, we consistently see how our spending choices may be perpetuating our infrastructure challenges.

There are some who may call such review a Band-Aid, to which I may note filling a pothole itself is a Band-Aid—a necessary solution reflecting a deeper challenge underneath and, importantly, the first step in a cure. Our pothole czar will make sure that we're using best practices in how we take reports, how and when we deploy our City employees to tackle these issues, and how we rebuild our streets. I am proud that we have secured funding in our budget to support implementation of this vital role.

Long term, we need as policy-makers to reverse mistakes we've made in the past. That's why along with introducing the budget tomorrow, I will introduce a resolution reversing a past Council action that allowed the City for accounting purposes to certify our road quality at only 60 percent versus 70, 80, and 90 percent rankings in peer cities and suburban communities. Rare is it that a City hopes for a D-grade level for the quality of service delivery to its citizens, and our citizens shouldn't have to stand for it any longer.

I also ask my colleagues to re-affirm our promise to voters that priorities for our GO bond expenditures and capital improvement sales tax will be applied to taking care of the roads, bridges, and buildings we've already built. Every district—north, central, and south—have tens of millions of dollars in deferred maintenance needs. We have a big city. Rather than building new, let's spend some time taking care of what we've got.

But, basic services don't stop with street maintenance.

I recently went on a snowplow ride along, and this story is illustrative of so many things we're doing right, and many that we're doing not so right, when it comes to delivering basic services.

After the first major snow of this winter, I had the privilege of riding on a snowplow with a veteran City employee named Ray Sanders, who's worked in our Public Works department for 28 years. Ray taught me all sorts of things—from the difference between salt and calcium treatment on our roads, to the unique strategies required for plowing a side street versus a major artery or even asking why we don't better coordinate with surrounding jurisdictions, so that when plowing Blue Ridge Boulevard, for example, our drivers don't have to pick up the plow blades as one enters and exits Raytown, Independence, and Kansas City. If mutual aid works in public safety, it should well work for public works.

Ray Sanders is here with us tonight. Ray, will you please stand so we can acknowledge you?

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We recognize telling Ray “good job” isn’t enough. That’s why we’ve included in this year’s budget proposal salary increases for all staff. We know we can and must do more and we will over the years ahead to make sure the people who keep our city running get the respect—backed by the pay—they deserve.

Over recent years, we’ve also heard loud and clear your concerns about trash pickup in too many parts of the city. Last year alone, the City received more than 10,000 trash pickup complaints—most of which came from parts of our community, like the Northland, where the City was relying on contractors to manage trash collection. We have since severed ties with contractors and are instead investing in enhancements to our solid waste collection programs. We will expand service to Kansas City North and South in the coming fiscal year.

Not only will this improve trash-collection services, but it will save our taxpayers a substantial amount—nearly \$20 million over the next 10 years.

And on water rates—we continue to work with the federal government to make sure we are fulfilling the obligations of our consent decree and correcting for mistakes of decades past, while pushing for needed concessions to make sure you, our residents, aren’t burdened by high water rate increases.

Because of our efforts with regulators in Washington, rate increases this year will be significantly lower than in recent years past. While we still have more work to do—understanding that utility costs are still far too steep for many working families and retirees in Kansas City—this is a positive step that we’ll continue to build upon.

Our work in local government extends beyond basic service delivery, but also relates to how we can help remove barriers to success for our residents. Today in Kansas City, a person living in one of our poorest zip codes has a life expectancy twenty years lower than someone in one of our wealthiest neighborhoods just a few miles to the west.

These geographic differences tell us that we need to continue to do more to help the parts of the city that have suffered from decades of disinvestment. Our economic development and housing policies need to help us remove those barriers, so that a child who grows up on 33rd and Cypress has the same opportunities as a kid elsewhere to be a doctor, a teacher, or if they’re really crazy, a mayor or city councilmember.

One area of change that is essential is that the era of trickle-down economic development policy come to an end. I grew up in some of Kansas City’s poorest neighborhoods. Since my childhood, we’ve heard that new jobs just a few miles to the west might create more opportunities to those of us east. We’ve heard for a generation that inclusive prosperity and that buzzword of “momentum” would come our way—but too many are still working, waiting, and wanting to be part of that momentum. And, increasingly, neighborhoods left out of our development focus aren’t just east of Troost, they’re south of 75th Street, east and west; they’re in southern Clay County, they’re throughout Kansas City, where we need to recognize economic development isn’t just about tax-abated luxury housing development in one part of the City; it’s about supporting long-standing local businesses looking to expand in our neighborhoods; it’s about investment on corridors like Blue Ridge, Independence Avenue, and North Oak.

And that’s why this year and in the years to follow you’ll see significant change in how we do economic development. This year’s budget will have a significant at least half-million dollar reduction to city support of the Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City. This right-sizing reflects administrative change over the past year, the ability of City Hall to handle much of development finance review, and our need to reorient what inclusive economic prosperity looks like for all Kansas Citians.

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Our renewed approach to economic development has also included new boards and commissions that reflect our community more than ever before. Representatives from area school districts now serve on every economic development board and commission, including the Port Authority and the Economic Development Commission Board of Directors. Kansas Citians of all ages, from all communities, and all backgrounds—not just development interests—are part of our economic development decision-making processes. And, our agencies are ensuring that we continue to seek more development opportunities in new areas, like down the street at Bannister and Troost, at the Kansas City International Airport, and throughout the east side, aided by our new Central City Economic Development Sales Tax leadership.

And, by the way, more appointees than ever before are women from our community, because our decisionmakers *must* start looking more like the community they represent. I know that several of our appointees are here with us tonight. Let's acknowledge them. Thank you.

As we proceed, we know there will be disagreement on some projects. I have voted against many projects since my election to Council in 2015, but I have voted for many as well. While I am proud the Lucas ordinance of 2015 reshaped the incentives available in our community, I know there is more work to do to make sure our incentive programs align with our development priorities.

We will never stop looking to bring jobs to Kansas City. We will never stop looking to bring population to Kansas City, particularly in long-underserved neighborhoods. But, I recognize we need all stakeholders to be at the table and that we need to continue to reform how we use our tools. That's why in our six months we've channeled Port Authority back to its statutory mission; that's why we've been the first City in the region to codify an end to the economic development border war between Missouri and Kansas; and that's why Kansas City, Missouri has been a leader in talking about how housing and transit are key parts of development, as well. In the months ahead, my office will be hiring a fellow to do the hard work of reviewing all of our tools and crafting policies to create fair economic development policies for all Kansas City neighborhoods. We also will do the important work of securing permanent leadership of the Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City that understands how to get deals done while looking out for the best interest of our neighborhoods.

That's why we also have continued our work to create affordable housing opportunities for all Kansas Citians.

On housing quality, we've made great strides thanks to the efforts of Council, the KC Tenants group—many of whom are here tonight—and responsible housing providers who recognize the right of tenants to have working appliances, to be free of harassment, and to have someone to call when they are sexually harassed by a provider. We have much more work to do, but the Tenants' Bill of Rights puts Kansas City at the forefront of protections for the half of our city that rents.

Of course, there's much work to be done.

This year's budget does not reallocate our tens of millions of dollars per year of neighborhoods and housing services spending into a housing trust fund and I will note here I remain steadfast in my commitment of not seeking a sales or property tax increase to fund it. We cannot rob Peter to pay Paul, asking our poorest citizens time and again to impose further regressive taxes on themselves to fund what government and private actors should already provide.

That doesn't mean we give up.

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Our budget this year and the work with our federal partners my office has done in six months do find more resources to support the creation of quality, affordable housing opportunities for homeless and low- and medium-income Kansas Citians. Over the past several months, my office has met with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington and Kansas City to secure funding for needed affordable housing initiatives. That work has resulted in an amazing \$13.9 million in regional funding for local programs serving the homeless, as well as deploying millions in additional HUD funding to build new affordable housing units, provide needed building maintenance to senior centers and women's shelters, and help hundreds of low-income homeowners make needed repairs—in every part of Kansas City; north, central, and south.

According to the City's annual resident survey, a quarter of all residents reported that they have had to take a second job, work more hours, or accumulate credit card debt to pay their rent or mortgage. And in our poorest neighborhoods, a third of all renters reported living in housing with unresolved maintenance issues. This is why our work beyond the budget remains important. This year, we will work to better leverage our funding sources – including federal sources such as the Community Development Block Grant, which provides millions of dollars per year, our local taxpayer-supported resources, such as the Central City Economic Development Sales Tax, and fees received from development to support projects that make a difference. Because, my friends, east side economic development isn't just a strip mall or a three-story building—it's providing new affordable housing for families, jobs for people in our neighborhoods, and funds to help support rehabilitation of our single family housing stock in mature, working class neighborhoods. I also have been adamant in visits to Jefferson City and with Governor Parson that restoration of the low income housing tax credit program is essential to rebuilding neighborhoods in not just Kansas City, but in cities and towns throughout Missouri.

Everyone sleeps somewhere. As I have known in my own life, sometimes homelessness may mean you're sleeping somewhere that's not safe, somewhere that's not warm, or somewhere that's temporary. Advocates for low-income housing don't come to City Hall each day. Some may not vote. But homelessness and housing insecurity lead to family instability, lead to challenges in every school district in our city, diminish the strength of our workforce. Small investments in a child's life, in a family's life, make great differences for every social problem we face as a city.

So when I think of the significant strides we've made in empowering tenants or making city buses free this year, I think of the mothers, fathers, and families who will have recourse to demand that their furnace work in winter or that the stairs their kids climb each day get repaired, or who will save a thousand or fifteen-hundred dollars a year on bus fare they can instead spend on healthy food for their children.

This new mayor and new City Council—many of whom are first-time Council members—have only been in office for six months; but I think these past six months have been more positive, more consequential, than my last four years as a City Councilman—largely because of the passion my colleagues bring to our jobs each and every day to help working men and women in our community. Zero fare transit is but one example.

While our move to Zero Fare Transit received national attention, what is so remarkable to me is that every single Council member, from districts across our community, banded together to say: it's time that the people have a win.

I am proud to announce tonight that our City budget, in a cost-sharing agreement with the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, fully funds the city-supported portion of just under \$5 million for our Zero Fare Transit initiative, and we are on track to launch fare-free service this year. As planned, the private sector has stepped up in a big way: we have had extensive conversations with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City who

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understand that free public transportation would allow Kansas Citians to access opportunities for employment and education—which lead to better quality of life and, therefore, better health for our community. Because zero fare aligns with their mission, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City is at the table to contribute up to \$1 million in year one alone to help launch this important initiative.

Positive changes in this year's budget are not limited to investments in housing, Zero Fare Transit, and basic services, we also look to build permanent investments in programs taxpayers have consistently said they want us to support—social workers rather than just officers at the Kansas City Police Department, mental health and trauma investments supported by our health levy. What you will see is our City's most equitable and responsible budget in recent memory.

There will be reductions. In addition to the Economic Development Corporation, you will see adjustments to Visit KC, the Office of Cultural and Creative Services, and the Kansas City Film Office—due largely to increases in the millions of dollars of costs on this year's budget from management and catering fees to fund the Downtown Convention Center Hotel project made my a previous Council and a previous administration. These should remind us the deals we hatch have long-term implications on our fiscal condition and our ability to deliver key services.

Our budget also looks to re-prioritize finite Kansas City, Missouri taxpayer investments in health and human services where organizations or initiatives have alternative and significant sources of support. Our budget cannot merely rubber-stamp those things that occurred before. We must look to where the City can be most effective, areas where other cities or jurisdictions can and should pay in (and often do not), and where we can collaborate with other agencies, like Jackson County COMBAT.

Removing barriers for our residents doesn't always involve cost or a budget line item either. Among the greatest housing initiatives we've seen this year, is the non-taxpayer supported veterans' community project, or VCP. Each day, they work to meet veterans—young and old—where they are. All we did was changed the zoning, at no cost to our taxpayers and thanks to the support of Councilwoman Loar, Councilman Barnes and then-5th District Councilwoman Canady. They—VCP—did all the work. They aid in supporting veterans find transit (free, by the way), work, treatment, camaraderie, and they do it by removing judgment and bureaucratic challenge from the equation. VCP is a representation of what's best in Kansas City—creativity, ambition, hard work, and compassion—and I want to thank one of their founders Brandonn Mixon for his work and for being with us tonight.

The VCP story is what you see in organizations, large and small, in our city. They don't need our government financial support; they need our ideas, our encouragement, our volunteering, so that they can make our city a better place.

I thought about VCP a few months back. I had a friend who was a vet, served during the Bush years, and came back home, never getting beyond the service he left behind. He's a father of three. He had a job. But, he also was a frequent user of marijuana. That use caught up to him during a traffic stop on the Kansas side. His small amount of marijuana got him ten days in jail in—away from his family; his daughters; losing his job; challenging the very things that were actually keeping his life together. Like many, he's a proud man, so he never called for help. I learned about his predicament and called VCP who have been there for him ever since. Thank you.

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What I learned from that and his efforts to rebuild his life was, while we can't all fix every situation, we can do our level best to remove barriers to someone like that U.S. serviceman trying to rebuild his life, even in light of some past mistakes.

As our state has legalized marijuana for medical purposes, our city voted to decriminalize possession of marijuana by a three-to-one margin, why are we still tearing down a vet's life? We've done that for too long and that's why next week, my office will begin our process of pardoning municipal violation of marijuana possession and marijuana drug paraphernalia convictions for all non-violent offenders in Kansas City. The mayor's website will post an application for a Kansas City marijuana possession or marijuana pardon for drug paraphernalia convictions, with instructions to complete and return it to my office. Those same forms will be available in the City Clerk's office at City Hall.

Our reasoning is simple. Government can't solve everything . . . I want to empower people to be able to find work, take care of their families, make a decent living . . . and every day we will find ways to make their effort to do that in Kansas City just a little bit easier. This is but one step.

I also continue to believe we should remove marijuana altogether from our code of municipal ordinances. State and federal law remain clear in the legality of marijuana possession, offering a path forward in marijuana distribution cases where larger levels of marijuana are involved. The City, in my view, doesn't need to be in that business. I know there's work to do there, but I hope my colleagues will keep an open mind in how we can make our local drug laws more fair and just.

I've said a lot tonight, and I haven't even mentioned—and won't discuss at this juncture—the airport, streetcar, or growth downtown. You see, we'll make sure we get big deals done, complete big projects on time and on budget, have representation from all backgrounds on big projects in Kansas City, and get the notoriety that benefits a great American city.

But I'd say almost none of it matters to a huge chunk of our population if we lose another 148 people this year; 500 over the next four years; one thousand of our sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters over the next eight years. This year we already have lost to homicide:

- Earl, age 41
- Raphael, age 32
- DeAndre, age 21
- Treshaun, age 17
- Georgia, age 38
- Tina, age 36
- Derrick, age 31
- Bobby, age 18
- Raeven, age 25
- Chase, age 23
- Andre, age 22
- Phillis, age 61
- Miguel, age 16
- Lavance, age 48
- Richard, age 29
- Christopher, age 44

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Almost all died from gunshot wounds. Only four had reached middle age. Several others are unknown. Others were culpable. Dozens more have been shot this year.

Each fatal victim... Each living victim... has a story; has a family; and has an impact on our community.

Early in my term, a woman came to my office and said, “Mayor, I like what you’re doing, but you have to stop talking violent crime. You just won’t solve it. Find something you can.”

And, you know, maybe she’s right. Maybe we’re on a fool’s errand. And, Lord knows, in our battle with the streets, the streets are winning, as they have been since I was a boy who heard gunshots at night.

But, we can never give up. And, maybe it’s personal. With the exception of my time in law school, I’ve never lived a year in a neighborhood without a homicide. I’ve always seen life through the proverb of “*There but for the grace of God, go I.*” Many of us in Kansas City share that feeling.

That’s why can never stop caring about kids, parents, people who deserve a chance to grow old in our community.

We owe it to the victims, to their families, to our own community, to the lives we may yet save... of victims and assailants.

That’s why this year we propose a few things you would expect and a few things you would not. We increase the number of police officers once more. But we also recognize more boots on the ground alone cannot solve our violent crime epidemic. We invest this year in permanent social worker positions. We also invest in probation officers to ensure that convicted domestic abusers cannot keep their firearms to terrorize—or in too many cases, murder—their partners.

I also want to commend Council on steps we have already taken. Just a few months into my term, I visited the Rose Brooks Center—an emergency domestic violence shelter—for a tour of their facility. During that tour, I struck up conversation with an employee named Annie Struby, who just happens to also be a lawyer, and she provided us with an idea on how strengthen laws surrounding firearm ownership for those who have been convicted, not just charged, but convicted of domestic abuse—of beating, whipping, strangling their loved ones.

Thanks to Annie’s work, the work of Jane Brown, a former judge and Assistant United States Attorney, in my office, and of my colleagues on the Council we were back at Rose Brooks a few weeks later, announcing the introduction of an ordinance to get guns out of the hands of wife beaters and domestic abusers, who, as a class, are far more likely to kill their partners. Since then, our legislation has been introduced or adopted by St. Joseph, St. Louis City and County and numerous other Missouri communities. Annie’s work, Jane’s work, our work, can now protect almost two million Missourians from harm.

But back to Rose Brooks: while there, I met a woman by the name of Liz Donnelly. In May of 2005, Liz lost her daughter, Jennie, to abuse. On the day of her death, Jennie’s ex-husband sent her numerous text messages, claiming that he needed to see her—and it was urgent. At this time, Jennie and this man had been divorced for several months, following a nearly year-long separation.

Still, after work that day, Jennie went to his apartment. In a premeditated attack, her abuser shot her multiple times and killed her.

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Liz and her family found out after Jennie's death that Jennie's neighbors had called the police on several occasions after overhearing shouting from her house. At that time, Jennie and her assailant were still together. Jennie's oldest daughter later told Liz of physical abuse that she'd witnessed but her father warned her never to tell anyone or he'd do the same to her.

Liz, I know you are here and I want you to know that we thank you for sharing your story, protecting others, and never giving up on the sometimes challenging struggle to save lives.

I share this story to show that the solutions to our most challenging problems may be in the budget released tomorrow but also may be something we learn from someone along the way. This is why I am proud to work with Councilwoman Robinson on an amended version of her resolution to have the City study violent crime and the governance structure of our police force. The goal of this is hear from the community and from experts in public safety to learn what we can do to address gun violence. We need to assess the effectiveness of the many programs, some working and others not, that we are currently funding, and to identify the changes needed to make our city safer. We will have law enforcement, community members, and Council involved, to ensure we hear from all voices.

There's been much to divide us as a country and a community over the past year and there will be over the years ahead. In Kansas City, we've had different views on how to honor our heroes, on how to stimulate economic development, on how to make our community safer. But in preparation for tonight, I thought back to one of the more unifying moments of this year—and it relates to football. No, it wasn't the Chiefs' amazing defensive stop with two minutes left in the Super Bowl, it was a Missouri high school football playoff game, played down the street from my house between Lincoln College Prep and Platte County R-III High School—two teams with many of their players from Kansas City.

Lincoln's team had resurrected their greatness in football, becoming the talk of the town and having what appeared to be almost every student from their school in the stands that chilly fall night. Platte County for years has been one of the class programs in our state. I talked to fans and parents from both teams and what I caught was pride. Pride in their children. Pride in their schools and pride in a city that brings a great urban high school together with outstanding suburban and rural communities. Pride to know that they all—different races, different lived experiences—make up what is Kansas City. And I realized how lucky I am to be a leader here.

With our budget and our policies over the next year . . . Let's make sure we're creating equal opportunities for all those kids who were there—in the stands, on the field, cheering on the sidelines—even the ones who may makes some mistakes along the way. Let's make sure all those kids are safe and let's make sure we maintain quality, affordable neighborhoods they'll want to return to.

The budget you'll see tomorrow is the most equitable one many of us likely have ever seen in this city. It tells everybody in this city that they matter, and their neighborhoods, their issues—and, for our workers, their pay—matter.

But, it's only a beginning of our work to build the community our residents and our children deserve.

God bless you and God bless our great city.