

Mayor Matt Mahan Inaugural Speech

Good evening everyone and thank you so much for being here tonight!

¡Buenas noches a todos y muchas gracias por estar aquí esta noche! Me siento honrado de tenerlos aquí!

KÍNH CHÀO TOÀN THỂ QUÍ VỊ! CẢM ƠN QUÍ VỊ CÓ MẶT HÔM NAY!

I am incredibly honored to stand here in front of you as San Jose's 66th Mayor!

Before we begin, I want to acknowledge the tragedies that have plagued us in the last month, both nationally and close to home.

Tyre Nichols' death in Memphis was a brutal reminder that our nation still has so far to go to fulfill its promise of justice for all. And closer to home, communities across our state have experienced 4 mass shootings in one week. We start ending this cycle of violence by remembering those whose lives have been taken and acknowledging that something is deeply wrong.

Please join me in a moment of silence for all those who lost their lives to this senseless violence.

[Moment of Silence] Thank you.

Now, to start, I have to thank the most important person in the room – your emcee tonight and my incredible wife, Silvia. Not to age us, Silvia, but I've spent the last 18 years falling more and more in love with you. You, Nina and Luke are the very best parts of me.

And thanks to all of you! To my super volunteers, house party hosts, neighborhood leaders and residents across the city who came together to build the revolution of common sense – I couldn't imagine beginning my first term without each and every one of you here, celebrating all our city is, and all that it can be.

There is, however, a member of my family whose absence today I feel strongly. A man who always delivered. A letter carrier who went to work 6 days a week, until he was 73 years old. A man who believed he was the luckiest guy in the world. A man who passed away last year, but whose memory inspires me every day to deliver to my fullest ability, to have boundless gratitude and to meticulously focus on the details in everything I do.

My dad was, and is, my hero. And one thing he prided himself on was consistency — a diligent focus on ensuring he delivered a basic service to the best of his ability. He knew which mailboxes leaked, and when it rained, he carefully placed that person's mail in a plastic bag so it wouldn't get wet. He knew where the older folks on his route lived, and checked in on them if

the mail started to pile up. He had what some may see as a small job, but he made a lasting impact on many lives. On his last day before retiring, the mailboxes on his route were full of balloons and heartfelt notes of gratitude.

Because of my dad, I grew up in a household where delivery wasn't just a promise, it was a guiding principle. Where blessings large or small were never taken for granted and no job was too small or trivial to give it your all.

My dad and my mom, who is here tonight, saw San Jose as a city that epitomized opportunity, which inspired my decision to attend Bellarmine on a work-study scholarship, despite the four-hour commute. I worked off my tuition as a member of the grounds crew each summer, where I applied the lessons from my father as we tackled issues literally from the ground up. We focused on what needed to be done – starting with the basics. We took what some may consider small jobs – picking up trash, planting trees, painting walls – and we delivered – making a real impact on the quality of the campus experience for my fellow students and teachers.

I brought this same focus on the basics to teaching, to the business world, and now I am bringing it to City Hall – where, let's be honest, we need it the most. We've over-complicated our government to the point that we struggle to deliver results on the basic quality of life issues that impact our residents every single day. I heard it so clearly during the campaign at thousands of doors and across hundreds of neighborhood meetings that we, as a city, must start by addressing the basics: homelessness, blight and crime.

One of the greatest temptations in government is to try to be everything to everyone. The truth is that there are needs and desires in our community that far outstrip the capacity of City Hall. And when we attempt to solve every problem at once, the harsh reality is that we tend not to solve any of them.

But, when we get back to basics, we can unlock the tremendous talent and capacity that exists in our staff at City Hall. When we are focused, we are more innovative and more accountable.

And at this moment, our residents not only expect but demand that we be accountable for delivering on the basics—housing the unhoused, cleaning up our neighborhoods, making San Jose the safest big city in America once again. And not only do I know that we can deliver these results, but I know that when we do, there's no stopping what San Jose can become. At our best, no city is a better place to be than San Jose.

Since the election, I've been asked over and over again how we will bring this city together with so much political division. But the truth is — we have more that unites us than divides us. In that spirit, I'm grateful that Supervisor Chavez is here tonight. I look forward to working with Board President Ellenberg, you Cindy, and your colleagues. We are all here for the same reason, elected by the people of this city, and dedicated to seeing it become the best it can be.

I know that our City Manager Jennifer Maguire, our assistant City Manager Lee Wilcox and every single city council member is committed to creating a city that works not just for us but for the next generation. To do this, we need to begin with the basics.

We all agree on the future we want – and here is how I am proposing we get there through policies rooted in hope but guided by common sense. We do this by rolling up our sleeves and turning words into action.

When it comes to the basics – no action is more basic than cleaning up our city. This starts today – behind me is a QR code, please take a moment to scan it, and sign up for what we are calling our Inaugur-Action Days: clean-ups across the city kicking off a new era of resident involvement. We all have a role to play in creating the cleaner, more beautiful neighborhoods we want to live in, starting with the small jobs like we did on the grounds crew – picking up trash, planting trees, painting walls. Our very first Inaugur-Action day is in District 7 this weekend.

By diving into our neighborhoods and taking ownership for their appearance we will grow civic pride in our city. Through the newly created Neighborhood Outreach team in my office, in partnership with BeautifySJ and exceptional organizations like the San Jose Conservation Corps, we will clean up our city, strengthen our neighborhood associations, and commit ourselves to doing what it takes to ensure a better quality of life for every resident.

The next step is to expand programs that work like San Jose Bridge and Cash for Trash, which employ homeless residents in city-wide clean up efforts.

I want to thank former Mayor Sam Liccardo (who is enjoying a well-deserved vacation) for his dedication to these innovative programs. Under his leadership over 500 tons of debris have been taken off our streets just in the last year. We need to build on this success. In the coming years we will provide hundreds of additional individuals the dignity of work and the opportunity to contribute to a cleaner city.

You all just took out your phones a moment ago to become a part of the solution, and soon, we will make it much easier for you to snap a photo of blight anywhere in the city and know when it has been addressed with San Jose's upgraded and more accessible 311 app. We will make sure that your blight reports are not only addressed quickly, but that you are sent back a photo to demonstrate the impact we're delivering. This is just one piece of a larger vision that City Manager Maguire and I share for ensuring that every department in our city brings a customer service mindset to the work we do for our residents.

Of course, cleaning up our city will be an endless, Sisyphean task unless we hold perpetual violators accountable for blighted properties and illegal dumping. Today, 22% of our code enforcement division is vacant. We will hold ourselves accountable for fully staffing this team to work through the backlog of nearly 4,000 code complaint cases. Actions must have consequences – it is unacceptable for one person's negligence to burden the entire community.

Next, we deliver on the basics by ending San Jose's era of unmanaged encampments. It's time we treated homelessness as the humanitarian crisis it is, and scale up basic, cost-effective and safe places for homeless residents to live as an alternative to our streets and creeks.

If we had a massive earthquake tomorrow (let's knock on wood that we don't!*) – an earthquake that displaced 4,975 people (which is the number of neighbors living unhoused on our streets), FEMA would have safe shelters lined up on public lands within 72 hours. Every displaced person would have access to shelter. While I agree permanent affordable and supportive housing is the ultimate goal, we can't rely on an incremental approach to a crisis of the magnitude we see on our streets each day.

Right now, new housing for a person transitioning out of homelessness costs nearly 1 million dollars per door and takes over 5 years to build. We know that by using basic, pre-built modular units placed on government owned land, we can create safe homes for a fraction of the current cost. We've committed ourselves to building 1,000 interim housing units in San Jose and thanks to the hard work of city staff we are on track to complete these units in the two years ahead. And together we will identify sites for the next 1,000 units – and the 1,000 units after that. This will be transformative not just for the people living in them, but for our entire community.

Even so, we can't wait until these interim housing opportunities are fully established. We need to scale up shelter capacity and transition facilities in the meantime and dramatically reduce the barriers to getting our homeless neighbors into safe, managed spaces with bathrooms and basic services. We've seen success using these tactics in just the past few weeks as San Jose came together to turn a one-time evacuation order due to the storms into a more lasting and positive impact by sheltering over 100 formerly homeless neighbors at our existing interim housing sites. We can't wait for another crisis to push us towards dramatic action – we need to act boldly now.

We also must not lose sight of the importance of prevention. It is just common sense that it is better to spend a few thousand dollars to keep someone stably housed while they look for a new job than to spend the \$65k per year per person it costs us to manage unsheltered homelessness.

Finally, we must acknowledge what isn't working nearly well enough – and a big example is our mental health and addiction treatment system. We need to push for reform, starting by supporting Governor Newsom's CARE court system and Senator Susan Eggman's new bills in the State Legislature that work to update our conservatorship laws and improve access to treatment so that our most vulnerable residents get the care they need.

I've seen firsthand how early intervention can save lives. A close friend of mine in college experienced a serious mental health crisis, and didn't think he needed care. I urged him to seek help, and after a difficult year with significant time in in-patient care—mental health professionals found a care plan that worked, and today he is gainfully employed with a beautiful family. We

need to create a system that helps loved ones, first responders and concerned bystanders get people in crisis the help they need.

The last, and perhaps most fundamental priority we begin with is public safety and I am excited to partner with our Police Chief, Tony Mata, our Fire Chief, Robert Sapien, and our entire Council to work together to make our city the safest big city in America once again.

San Jose has one of the most thinly-staffed police departments in the country. Right now, the average wait time for a priority one call is 7 minutes, and for priority two calls, folks wait 23 minutes, more than twice our performance goal. This is the unacceptable consequence of low staffing levels. Last year, our city council committed to adding 15 officers per year over the next five years. But that's just not enough. We need to double that rate to at least 30 officers per year because no one in distress should have to wait so long for help to come.

To do this, we'll need creative strategies to attract a new generation of officers who reflect the community they are sworn to serve and protect. This requires allocating additional funding to recruitment methods that work, including moving from an unpaid to paid cadet program to allow young people with fewer financial means the same opportunity for a career in law enforcement, it means reinstating the bonus given to officers for recruiting new hires and increasing our outreach to the diverse communities that make up our city.

In addition to increased recruitment and hiring, we will bring down wait times and overtime costs and boost officer morale by investing in better reporting tools, digitizing cumbersome forms, and working with our County partners to reduce in-take times at the County Jail.

We will also hold ourselves accountable for this basic priority by paying as much attention to what isn't working as what is. Our police officers report arresting the same individuals a shocking number of times – in fact, between January 2020 and April 2022, SJPD arrested or cited 877 people 5 or more times each, 103 people 10 or more times each, and in that same time frame, one person was arrested 27 times. Systems that fail to intervene in cycles of crime cost us more than we can afford – monetarily, in terms of officer morale, and most importantly, in our collective loss of security.

We need to disrupt this pattern by identifying the small number of people who need intervention and creating a system that intervenes early and appropriately.

I'm committed to working with our County leaders to ensure that when an officer takes someone to jail or Valley Medical Center, they are not simply returned to the street a day or two later when their situation demands further intervention. When someone who has failed to show up for their court date or reoffended for a second, third, fourth or 28th time – we need to ensure they are held accountable for their offense and given the opportunity to get on a better path. Together, we can build a more just criminal justice system that does a better job of treating, supporting and rehabilitating those who are willing, but we should never forget that our primary responsibility is to protect the innocent.

Speaking of the innocent, our best crime fighting strategy in the long run is investing in our youth. As a former East Side public school teacher, I know the barriers and challenges our at-risk youth face. Life has not been fair to far too many of San Jose's children, our children. And while the City cannot do this alone, together we must—even and perhaps especially during economically tenuous times—invest in the after school programs, tutoring, job opportunities, gang prevention strategies and other tools at our disposal for giving our kids access to a better future.

Clean Streets. An end to the era of encampments. Safe neighborhoods. These are clear goals with clear metrics of success. These are the basics, and that's where we will begin.

To hold ourselves accountable for delivering on these basic priorities, we will create a public “Dashboard of Results” showing exactly what progress is being made — or not made on blight, homelessness and crime — so YOU always know where the city stands.

My father taught me that a mailman always delivers – I believe our government should too.

These days, San Jose is much more than that big, shining city over the hill to me. It's the place my kids call home. A place defined by our unique neighborhoods. A place that values innovation and accountability. A place that thrives on diversity and embraces community activism. San Jose is a place where every resident, newly immigrated or fifth generation, blue collar or tech founder, son of a mailman or daughter of a Mayor, will find a brighter future and endless opportunity when we get back to and deliver on the basics!

Thank you.