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State of the City

Rothschild: 'Investing in Tucson' likely means higher sales tax

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Jonathan Rothschild Mayor of Tucson

In Mayor Jonathan Rothschild's "State of the City" speech, he indicated that Tucson leaders are poised to push for a half-cent sales tax increase to pay for core services. "Services have to be paid for, and so we're going to have that conversation with the community," he said.

"When you're proud of something, you take care of it. You invest in it — both time and money. And, you get a return on that investment," he said.

Rothschild's address, as prepared for delivery and released by his office.

Investing in Tucson

March 1, 2016 State of the City Address Mayor Jonathan Rothschild

Good afternoon. Welcome to the 2016 State of the City Address.

I'd like to thank the Tucson Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and the Tucson Convention Center for hosting this year's event, and I'd like to thank the Chamber for sharing proceeds with three local nonprofits: the Humane Society of Southern Arizona, Living Streets Alliance and Pima County Joint Technical Education District or JTED.

The Humane Society of Southern Arizona offers adoption, education, and spay/neuter programs, serving pets and the people who love them; Living Streets Alliance promotes multimodal transportation and pedestrian and bike

safety, making Tucson more attractive to millennials and more livable for all; and Pima County JTED provides affordable career and technical education to high school students, creating a job-ready workforce.

Please join me in thanking the Chamber for its contribution and these nonprofits for their work.

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I'd also like to thank my colleagues on the City Council, staff—both city staff and my staff—and everyone who worked with me or my office on various initiatives. City Manager Michael Ortega deserves special mention and thanks for putting forward a plan to bring the city to a structurally balanced budget over the next two fiscal years.

This is my first State of the City Address of my second term as mayor.

Before I talk about this year—and its challenges—I'd like to review some of our achievements this past year.

Where we've invested in our city, we've seen returns—and that's true whether we've invested in our economy, our community, or our city services.

ECONOMY

First, our economy.

Last year, the Tucson metro area added 8,900 jobs. Our job growth rate was 2.4%, in line with the average for the state. This is slower than we'd like, but let's not forget that a number of major employers chose to locate or expand operations in the region, including AFNI, APAC, Cenpatico, Centene, Comcast, FedEx, Garmin, GEICO, HomeGoods, Northwest Medical Center, OnTrac, Santé, Tucson Medical Center, Ventana Medical Systems, VXI Global Solutions and Watermark Retirement Communities.

City of Tucson incentives awarded just last year or at various stages of review—including Comcast and HomeGood—are helping to spur \$170.6 million in private capital investment and create more than 2,500 jobs.

Last year, we invested in the Five T's of our local economy, starting with technology.

TECHNOLOGY

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Good investments increase in value over time, and we're continuing to see returns from investments the city made in 2013 and 2014.

In 2013, the city partnered with the University of Arizona's Tech Launch Arizona to form the Commercialization Advisory Network—now a network of 750 industry professionals available to help tech entrepreneurs succeed. In the last fiscal year, Tech Launch Arizona filed 200 patents—35 were issued—executed 86 licenses and created 12 new startups in biotech, materials science, publishing and software. Three years ago, one of those startups was Sinfonía Healthcare.

In 2014, the city awarded StartUp Tucson \$50,000 in federal funds to train entrepreneurs—funds they used to develop a program called Thryve. That program went on to win a \$1.44 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration to help Tucson-area businesses scale up. Last year, one of Thryve's first graduates, RBar Energy, a Tucson company, won a \$250,000 Arizona Innovation Challenge grant and signed distribution deals to put its energy bars in stores and airports nationwide.

Businesses are even moving here to take advantage of Thryve—the only program of its kind in the West.

The city also invested in large tech employers last year, executing an agreement that helps Raytheon, Tucson International Airport and the Arizona Air National Guard. With approval by various federal agencies, the agreement allows Raytheon to use funds set aside in an annexation agreement to acquire the buffer it needs for expansion. It also allows the airport to double its runway capacity, giving the 162nd flexibility to add new missions.

In July, I went to Washington, D.C. to meet with Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James, to tell her about Tucson's strong support for our Airmen, our base and our military. I had quite a few examples to share with her: what we've done to protect Davis-Monthan from encroachment; Tucson's many civilian support organizations and programs for our Airmen—the DM50, the Military Affairs Committee, SADA; Pima Community College's base program and the A-rated TUSD and charter schools on base. She told me it was "music to her ears" that the community supports the base and is open to new missions. Along with others, I invited her to visit D-M—she's never been here—and I'm pleased to report that Secretary James is expected to visit in the near future. I'm sure she'll be favorably impressed by our base and our city.

Aerospace and defense is our largest—but not our only—tech industry sector. Healthcare is another area that saw investment. Last year, the city approved zoning for a new 11-story, 700,000 square-foot patient tower and entrance, part of Banner's \$500 million capital investment in Banner University Medical Center. Construction is set to begin this year.

With financial support from the Arizona Commerce Authority and the Sun Corridor, we convened the Greater Tucson Healthcare Industry Partnership, a group consisting of hospital CEOs and other industry leaders, to address issues affecting the healthcare industry in our region, such as workforce development, patient care and marketing. Working together in partnership can strengthen the sector for all.

Last year, Money Magazine ranked Tucson one of the five best cities for millennials—along with Seattle and Austin—and one thing this tech-savvy generation demands is connectivity. Cox's new gigabit Internet service for residential customers will meet that demand—making our city more attractive to young singles and families. This investment is just another example of how Tucson, working with our private partners, is leading the way as a progressive, tech-oriented city.

TRADE

We invested in trade. In fact, I see many sponsors of my Borderlands Trade Conference in this room. This year, the conference focused on the integrated supply chain between Southern Arizona and Northern Mexico, with workshop on manufacturing opportunities in aerospace and defense, automotive parts and medical devices. Mayors from Hermosillo, Mazatlán, Ciudad Obregón and Ambos Nogales were among the 350 business and government leaders in attendance. Tucson also welcomed Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Claudia Ruiz Massieu, and Sonora's Governor, Claudia Pavlovich, who came to celebrate the opening of the new, expanded consular office in Tucson.

I continue to believe that our path to prosperity runs from Guaymas to Nogales to Tucson and beyond. Where there are roadblocks, we want to remove them. So, when the Department of Homeland Security had difficulty filling the 170 additional U.S. Customs Agents authorized for Arizona by Congress, we held a job fair with DHS and TPD. Senator McCain obtained assurance that agents hired in Arizona would be assigned to border ports of entry in Arizona.

TRANSPORTATION

Trade also drives investment in transportation infrastructure.

Congress finally passed a five-year transportation bill that includes the CANAMEX and Sonoran Corridors as high priority corridors for the nation. These are our priorities, too.

The Arizona League of Cities and Towns passed overwhelmingly a City of Tucson sponsored resolution to accelerate design and construction of SR 189, the spur that connects the Mariposa Port of Entry to I-19. Working with PAG, we obtained a joint resolution of all the regional government associations in Arizona to make SR 189 a top priority. After several years of effort, the importance of SR 189 to Arizona's economy is beginning to be

understood throughout the state. I've also met with U.S. Deputy Secretary of Transportation Victor Mendez regarding this route, and will meet with him again later this month. He's indicated that the state's investment in SR 189 will help attract federal funding for improvements to I-19 and I-10 and planning funds for I-11, trade corridors of national importance.

Downtown Links Phase 3, from Church to Broadway, is in the final stages of design. Preparation for road construction continues this year, with utility relocation and building demolition. When complete, this will link Maclovio Barraza Parkway to I-10, finishing the cross-town parkway that connects the eastside to the westside. Also, at our council meeting next month, I expect to see a plan that allows us to approve the 30% design phase for the expansion of Broadway—which will add multimodal features to one of our major streets and pave the way for businesses to flourish along this arterial.

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TOURISM

Transportation investments benefit tourism as well as trade—both rely on safe, efficient transportation.

Over the last two years, Tucson International Airport has added nonstop service to Chicago's O'Hare and Midway airports, LAX and Seattle. Nonstop service to Guaymas is reportedly set to be announced, the first of what I expect will be several destinations we'll connect with in Mexico, opening a new era of cross-border trade and tourism for our region.

Recognizing that nonstop flights make Tucson a more attractive destination for business, the Tucson Metro Chamber reached out to the private sector to create a fund to add nonstop service to New York—a fund which, if successful, could be used to bring more nonstop flights to Tucson.

While international flights connect Tucson to the world, active, human-powered transportation connects us to our community and each other.

Bike share—where you use a credit card to rent a bike from a self-service station, sort of like carts at the airport—is a form of active transportation popular with tourists. I'm working with staff to bring bike share to Tucson. We've already secured federal funding to pay for infrastructure. We're seeking private sponsorships to pay for operations—as has been done in more than 50 other cities in the United States.

Our second annual HSL Properties Tucson Jazz Festival was a success, as was our first annual Tucson Festival of Films. Thirty-five percent of jazz festival ticket buyers were from out of town, up from twenty-eight percent last year, and most visitors stayed for more than five days. At least 8,000 people attended the Downtown Jazz Fiesta on Martin Luther King Day.

And, as I hope you've heard by now, Tucson is the first and only city in the United States to be designated a World City of Gastronomy by UNESCO. Visit Tucson, primarily funded by city and county bed tax—and doing a great job—has invested in all of these to promote our region.

When we promote Tucson to tourists, we're also reaching businesses. Many new residents first come here as tourists and some bring their businesses with them when they move.

Downtown continues to thrive, and the streetcar and city incentives are helping. The streetcar exceeded expectations, welcoming its millionth rider more than a month ahead of projections. Johnny Gibson's Downtown Market opened last year, and construction is underway on Two West Broadway, a multi-story, mixed use development, and the AC Hotel by Marriott—all three supported by city incentives.

Another incentive-supported project, the Marriott Residence Inn near the University of Arizona, is set to begin construction this spring.

And I can assure you, looking at available properties and interest from investors, we're not halfway to where we'll be in five years with downtown redevelopment.

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TEACHING

Teaching is the fifth T of our local economy.

Last month, my office partnered with the U of A's STEM Learning Center and the Arizona Technology Council to bring the TEALS program to Tucson-area schools. TEALS stands for Technology Education and Literacy in Schools. A Microsoft initiative, TEALS helps high schools build sustainable computer science programs by pairing teachers with trained computer professionals to team-teach computer science. After a year or two, the teacher takes over and teaches the class. I'm pleased to see strong interest from Sunnyside School District, TUSD and several of our large employers in introducing students to a field where there's great demand locally: computer science.

While the state is responsible for school funding, there are things city government can do to help. For example, nobody likes to see neighborhood schools close, but once they do, they need to find a new purpose quickly, so school districts don't pay to maintain empty buildings. We created tools to help, including expedited building plan reviews and deferred building permit fees. So far, they're helping redevelop four closed schools: Ft. Lowell, Van Horne and Wrightstown Elementary Schools, and Howenstein High School.

In 2014, the Arizona Mayors Education Roundtable, with support from the Helios Education Foundation and WestEd, released a report on the high cost of high school dropouts. In 2015, we released a report on disconnected youth—youth ages 16 to 24 who are not in school or working. While dropouts cost society roughly \$421,000 over a lifetime in lost taxes and increased spending on social and government services, disconnected youth cost more than one and a half times that: \$695,000 over a lifetime.

Why are these numbers important to know?

Along with many of you, I wrote to state legislative leaders urging them to fully restore funding to JTED, the state's career and technical education districts. Ultimately, the state restored all but \$1 million of the \$30 million originally set to be cut from the program, so JTED has been saved—for now. But, JTED can no longer receive funding for students who've graduated high school or are over 21. In other words, disconnected youth—each one of whom costs Arizona \$695,000 over a lifetime—will be denied access to the affordable career training JTED offers.

The business community must continue to advocate, along with everyone else, to put education funding at the heart of Arizona's economic development strategy, where it belongs. When people have the skills to get and keep a job, everybody wins.

COMMUNITY

We also invested in our economy by investing in our community.

In 2014, Wells Fargo and NeighborWorks America provided \$5 million in down payment assistance grants to low- and moderate-income homebuyers in Tucson and South Tucson. In 2015, they invested \$500,000 in various nonprofits, including the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, Old Pueblo Community Services, Our Family Services, Pima Community College Foundation, Pima Council on Aging, Tucson Clean and Beautiful and the Tucson Urban League, to address needs identified by my office in collaboration with the community. To take just one example, Pima Community College Foundation used its funding to pay GED testing fees for 415 Pima County residents. Demand was so great that funding was exhausted in just two weeks.

With help from Trees for Tucson and its sponsors, we planted close to 20,000 trees in little more than two years, including many in neighborhoods that lack shade from trees and are vulnerable to heat-related health risks.

We reached our goal of moving more than a million miles as part of the Tucson Moves a Million Miles campaign and, thanks to donations by community partners, including the JCC, the YMCA, Parks and Rec and Tucson Fire, we sponsored free fitness classes throughout the month of May.

We created a Commission on Food Security, Heritage and Economy to look at ways to increase food security and access to healthy food.

Working with Prescott College's Arizona Serve program, my office applied for and won a \$1.4 million Corporation for National and Community Service grant to raise graduation rates at eight high schools serving low-income neighborhoods—a program called Community Schools. Two years ago, my Commission on Poverty released a report that found a need to better integrate social services and to raise awareness of what services are out there. In our first year of the Community Schools program, we've placed AmeriCorps VISTA members at high schools and partner agencies to help coordinate wrap-around services for students and their families. This spring, we'll be holding bi-weekly resource nights at Catalina Magnet, Desert View, Flowing Wells, Palo Verde, Pueblo, Santa Rita, Sentinel Peak and STAR Academy high schools to connect students and families with FAFSA—the Free Application for Federal Student Aid—and income tax preparation services, government benefits and Individual Development Accounts—matched savings accounts—to save for college.

City school districts participated in school attendance initiatives—with special focus on the early grades, when habits, good or bad, are developed. In just one district, TUSD, there were 5,353 fewer absences in September, with 80% of schools improving attendance and 95% of kindergarten classes that participated in the "Bee at School!" contest improving attendance.

We held more Steps to Success walks with TUSD, knocking on doors of recent high school dropouts, encouraging them to come back to school. Since we started this two years ago, 314 students have re-enrolled and 41 of those students have graduated.

From June 2013 through January 2016, we housed 1,522 formerly homeless veterans—128 away from our original goal. Today, we have a "by name and by need" list of 311 veterans who are in shelters, on the streets, or in transitional housing, who we're working to get into permanent housing.

Our next step is to take what we've learned from our work with veterans and apply it to the chronically homeless. There, we have a list of 280 people who are chronically homeless and in need of supportive housing.

In another poverty-fighting measure, Tucson became the first city in Arizona to "ban the box"—deferring questions about job applicants' criminal history until they've been considered based on their qualifications. The Second Chance Coalition, which I co-founded with federal magistrate Judge Charles Pyle, held a symposium for the community on re-entry and a job fair for citizens returning from incarceration—attended by more than 1,200 job seekers. Many thanks to the 66 employers and service agencies that participated.

CITY SERVICES

And finally, we invested in city services—mainly where we had voter-approved bonds, federal grants, or enterprise funds to draw on.

The streets bond continued to come in under budget and ahead of schedule, with 613 lane miles completed. Because we're under budget, we've been able to add an estimated 548 lane miles of road restoration to the original plan.

The Tucson Fire Department won a two-year, \$8.6 million SAFER grant from the federal government, allowing us to hire 54 firefighters.

Using fee-for-service revenues, the city's Environmental Services Department made improvements at the Los Reale Landfill, including a new entrance, state-of-the-art scale house, interim administration building and household hazardous waste annex. Environmental Services

also continues to migrate collection trucks from diesel to CNG, or compressed natural gas. Not only is CNG cleaner burning than diesel, it's also cheaper to use, saving on vehicle maintenance costs.

Using a mix of fee-for-service revenues, Federal Transit Authority grant funds and general fund revenues, the city is replacing its 20-year-old CNG plant with a new CNG plant with new fueling technology, including 6 fast-fill stations for Sun Tran buses and other fleet vehicles and 90 time-fill stations for Environmental Services collection trucks. Time-fill stations let you cram more fuel into the tank, so trucks can run their routes all day without refueling. Using CNG for buses and collection trucks is expected to save more than \$40 million over the 20-year life of the plant.

In my Two-Year Plan, I challenged staff to set goals to reduce energy and water use for all city-owned facilities. Staff responded with EWIP, the Energy and Water Initiative Project. Consisting of 17 city departments and divisions, the EWIP team set goals that include cutting energy bills 2% per year and cutting potable water use 10% by 2020.

Last month, Mayor and Council approved a resolution to execute a Lease Purchase Agreement to finance installation of LED lighting on city streets and in city garages. When complete, this is expected to reduce energy consumption approximately 70%, creating a positive cash flow to the city of more than \$750,000 a year. City streets will have 21st century lighting, paid for entirely by savings on energy costs.

Tucson Water invested in its infrastructure, monitoring and replacing pipeline where there are leaks, rehabilitating reservoirs and continuing preventive maintenance. Following recommendations from its IBM Smarter Cities Challenge grant, Tucson Water continues to replace old water meters with new digital water meters and to upgrade its SCADA system, or Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system, which captures data and controls equipment throughout the utility. New equipment and software will help consumers and the utility save water and energy.

That's a recap of just some of our accomplishments last year. But what I really want to talk about is the future, and investing in that future to make our city prosper.

Specifically, I want to talk about increasing homeownership, investing in infrastructure and development, and paying for city services.

INCREASING HOMEOWNERSHIP

Homeownership stabilizes neighborhoods and improves educational outcomes—just two reasons why increasing homeownership is good for cities.

Buying a home can be an important way to build financial security, and pre-purchase counseling can give buyers the tools they need to make informed financial decisions.

Less than half of Tucson's housing units are owner-occupied. Furthermore, many renters are struggling to afford rent when homeownership could be a better bet for them. In Tucson, 40% more renters than homeowners are paying over a third of their income toward housing. More income going toward housing means less is available for other things—education, healthcare, investment, starting a business—things that improve lives and communities.

There are federal resources available to help homeowners as well as renters. But a 2014 survey by NeighborWorks America found that 70% of American adults don't know that down payment assistance is available for middle-income homebuyers.

We're going to do something about this. We're going to work with builders, lenders and realtors to provide favorable terms to homebuyers who agree to be owner-occupiers. We're going to work with our Industrial Development Authority, our housing department, the county's housing department, employers and nonprofits to promote program that help homebuyers and homeowners. We've already authorized our Industrial Development Authority to offer additional down payment assistance to moderate- and low-income home buyers. We need to make sure all available assistance gets put to good use. I want to thank Vantage West and Keller Williams for helping my office craft this

initiative. Over the next four years, we will increase homeownership in the City of Tucson, strengthening our neighborhoods, our schools and our community.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

We need to continue to invest in infrastructure and development.

Some of the larger tracts of land inside city limits aren't served by utilities. We need land that's shovel ready for businesses looking to locate in Tucson. We need to be in the running for new distribution and logistics centers, for new manufacturing plants. To win these highly- competitive, large-scale economic development projects, we need to be ready with infrastructure—water, wastewater and other utilities. The city, the county and other partners have indicated a willingness to help bring infrastructure to projects that expand our economic base. On behalf of the city and Tucson Water, I'm committed to making this happen.

Meanwhile, Tucson Water is preparing for growth along the Sonoran Corridor, relocating a planned water treatment facility in the Santa Cruz wellfield to better serve future demand in that area.

City staff will be meeting regularly with the State Land Department to plan and review opportunities for development of state land inside city limits. We'll identify opportunities to install infrastructure and plan zoning and other entitlements to make appropriate properties marketable and help grow our economy.

We can create shovel-ready land with infrastructure and entitlements, but today, many businesses want to lease existing buildings. Government can bring infrastructure and entitlements, but private buildings require private capital investment. Our vacancy rate for industrial properties is at its lowest level since 2006. When vacancies are low, there's not sufficient inventory to attract national site selectors. I'm committed to working with builders, investors, and lenders to increase Tucson's inventory of industrial properties so that we can take advantage of the many opportunities we're seeing.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT EXPANSION AND REINVESTMENT ZONES

There's more the city can do to improve our economy.

The city's Planning and Development Services Department is exploring technology upgrades and process improvements, as they expand their ombudsman approach to facilitating development projects from start to finish.

The Central Business District and the GPLET incentive have had great success spurring development downtown. If it were up to me, I'd have several more Central Business Districts, but state law limits us to one. We can, however, make ours larger, and I expect we will.

We can incentivize mixed-use development in strategic areas along major corridors. Cities in every state except Arizona have the option of creating their own tax increment reinvestment zones. It would be great to have that here, too. But, we'll use what tools we have.

For example, in areas identified in Plan Tucson as growth areas, we can offer administrative relief from requirements that don't affect health or safety, such as parking and setbacks. Where a road is not going to be widened, we can offer administrative relief from requirements in the city's Major Streets and Routes Plan. We can make the advantages of a PAD, a planned area development, available to sites smaller than 40 acres. And, we can adopt a zoning code like the county's, that allows for less intensive uses without having to go through a rezoning process. I intend to bring these proposals to Council within the next few months, and I hope they receive strong support from my colleagues.

Building our city's economic base requires cooperation and collaboration between government and business, with input from the community. The City of Tucson is working with many partners to make that happen.

PAYING FOR CITY SERVICES

In the last four years, we completed 16 annexations—four times as many as in the previous four years—adding more than six square miles of previously unincorporated land to the city. This includes the Auto Mall at Oracle and Wetmore and more than 2,000 acres of land at the airport—including the terminal itself—allowing us to offer incentives in these areas.

This year, we intend to do more. The City Manager reallocated some economic development funds to contract with part-time workers to go door-to-door and increase annexation efforts. I intend to launch a campaign where we send city staff to community events to let people know the importance of this effort as well as the advantages of being part of the City of Tucson. Annexation brings sales tax revenue and state-shared revenue. That's our money coming back to this community, rather than going to cities in Maricopa County, which have long benefited from the state's formula for sharing revenue.

Some feel that, for annexation to occur, Tucson needs to change its election system. In recent polling, just 16% of city voters prefer our current system to alternatives. I agree.

Because we have to be prepared for our 2017 city election cycle, I'm committed to putting alternative systems before the voters this November so they can decide—for the first time in nearly 25 years—how they want to elect their local leaders.

Regardless of which election system voters choose, I know people are proud of our city, proud to call themselves Tucsonans. So I know we'll continue to meet with success when we ask people to join the city and become Tucsonans.

Pride in our city is why we doubled funding to fight graffiti. It's why Tucson Clean & Beautiful added to its Adopt-a-Mile and Adopt-a-Park programs. And, it's why the Tucson Metro Chamber continued its First Impressions Project, improving medians on Tucson Blvd. from the airport to Valencia Blvd.

When you're proud of something, you take care of it. You invest in it—both time and money. And, you get a return on that investment.

In my 30 years in business, I learned this: you cannot cut your way to prosperity. At some point, you have to invest, and that means looking at the revenue side of the equation.

Unfortunately, the state has been looking at cities' revenues for some years now—and that's been bad news for cities.

We're all familiar with HURF funds that are supposed to pay for local road maintenance and repair being swept by the state to shore up its own budget.

The state's changes to construction sales tax made it more difficult for contractors to file and more difficult for cities to enforce. As a result, the City of Tucson's revenue from construction sales tax is less than half what it was just two years ago. The city lost \$4.5 million in the last half of fiscal year 2015, after the new law went into effect, despite our commercial building permits being up 22% and our residential building permits being up 76%. In fiscal year 2016, the city is projected to lose \$9 million.

Another change: cities are now required to pay the state to collect city sales tax, which, in Tucson, we've always done ourselves. Last fiscal year, we paid the state \$1.5 million to do this ... except they weren't able to do it yet, so we did it. This fiscal year, we're paying the state another \$1.5 million, and we still don't know when they'll be able to fulfill this function.

Since the recession, the City of Tucson has done all it can to cope with increased costs and decreased revenues. We reduced jail costs by contracting with Santa Cruz County. We received rebates from our vendor for using bank cards for purchasing. We used one-time fixes such as selling land and refinancing debt. We approved changes to our health insurance plan. We cut or eliminated programs, stopped replacing vehicles and equipment, deferred replacement and maintenance of infrastructure, and reduced city staff by almost 21%, largely through attrition. I'm reminded of what some of my friends in the military have told me: "We tried doing more with less. But the truth is, we're doing less with less."

The right size for government is the size that can deliver the services its people—and businesses—want and deserve

But services have to be paid for, and so we're going to have that conversation with the community. In fact, the conversation has already begun, with polling that indicates city voters are willing to consider a half cent sales tax to support core services—roads, public safety, transit and parks.

I look forward to the business community being part of that conversation and supporting the measures we ultimately put on the ballot, because a city that can offer strong core services— good roads, safe neighborhoods, quality parks and public facilities—is a city that says to residents and visitors, "This is a community we take pride in." It's a city that says to employers, "This is where you want to do business." It's a city that says to its youth, "This is where you want to stay." In short, it's a city that's going to see a return on its investment.

CONCLUSION

Tucsonans have been generous with their time—volunteering to help children learn to read, to bring dropouts back to graduate, to plant trees, to do a thousand things that could not get done without the help of volunteers—a thousand things that make this community better and stronger. I based my initiatives as mayor on help from volunteers because I knew it was a resource I could count on, and I'm extremely grateful for their investment of time and the caring and concern it represents.

Soon, we'll be asking for financial investment. And when we do, we'll have a detailed plan—like we did with the streets bond—spelling out what core services the funds will be used for.

In this presidential election year, when so many are so angry, so unwilling to talk to each other, much less work with each other, I value Tucson more than ever. We have not lost our willingness to listen, to compromise, to dream big and start small. We have not lost our idealism or our pragmatism. These are the things that make collective action possible, that make progress inevitable. We have not lost our spirit of community. I hope we never do.

Thank you for all you do for Tucson. And, thank you for allowing me the great privilege of serving as your mayor.

Jonathan Rothschild is the mayor of Tucson.

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have your say

Comments

There are no comments on this report. Sorry, comments are closed.



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