

Good evening. It is such an honor and privilege to stand before you as your mayor. And by now you probably know me well enough to know that I never use one word when I can use ten, but I do have one really short and simple message for you today:

“Thank you.”

Thank you to the 10:1 City Councils, my partners, my colleagues and my friends these last eight years. My mayor pro tem, my old mayor pro tem, my old mayor pro tem and the Council. I also understand that some of my old colleagues are here with us today. County Attorney Garza is here and Councilmember Casar, Councilmember Gallo, I think are all with us today. Thank you.

We also have other public officials that I want to thank for being here. State representative Celia Israel I understand is with us today, County Judge Andy Brown, our tax assessor collector and our voter registrar Bruce Elfant, I think is with us. You know, government has really worked together in ways over the last eight years that to my experience have been unprecedented.

Thank you to our city employees, city staff and its leadership. Your resourcefulness and dedication have impressed me since the moment I began my service. You are such a gift to the City. Manager Cronk, congratulations on the expanded family and I want you to know how much it means to me that you'd hurry home to be here today.

Thank you to the many community advocates and organizations whose expertise and energy made our ideas sharper and our policies more just. Some of you are in the room here tonight.

Thank you to my staff at City Hall over the course of these past eight years, without whom I'd just be some guy with a lot of crazy ideas. I will miss you all and I really mean that.

Thank you to my family, especially my wife Diane. She's been with me every step of the way and she is my partner in this job in ways few understand.

And thank you to the people of Austin.

To everyone who came to a town hall or a public meeting to make their voices heard. To everyone who voted. To everyone who loves this city enough to give something of themselves to make it better. Thank you.

Austin holds itself to pretty high standards.

I didn't recognize another one of my colleagues, another Mayor Pro Tem Sheryl Cole and I want to make sure I do that. Thank you, representative.

We are not comfortable celebrating our successes while we still know there are still Austinites struggling.

But tonight, we'll heed the advice of one of our own, the great Molly Ivins, who reminded us to fight for freedom and fight for justice and have fun doing it. To rejoice, she said.

And we should. Because the state of our city is one we should be proud of.

In 2015, when the new 10:1 Council and I were first elected:

There were some city employees and contractors making as little as \$7.25/hour. There was no mass public transit in sight. Affordable housing investment was modest, and we were building to a four-year backlog in untested DNA rape kits with far too many survivors waiting for delayed justice.

We had unsheltered neighbors living perilously in our creeks and in our storm drains, and we had no comprehensive plan to address workforce opportunities in our region. Meaningful and constructive police reform was an untouchable issue. A rising national extremist politics was increasingly threatening our local values.

It is true that much remains to realize the work that we have begun over the past 8 years. But for tonight, we pause and celebrate where we are and what we've achieved, how we got here, and where we need to go.

The state of our city, as measured against almost every metric used to compare cities, is exceptionally strong.

- Austin is among the top big cities to live in in the country. It remains one of the safest in the country. We are one of the healthiest.
- We rank number 1 in wage growth, we are number 2 in the country in job growth.
- Austin has one of the lowest unemployment rates among large cities in the country.
- The city budget we just passed is not only balanced, but it projects a surplus budget for each of the next four years.
- We are the best big city in the country for job-seekers. It is the best place for entrepreneurs to launch a startup.
- And, since it's not all business, all the time, we're in the top ten most fun cities to live in and we are the most fun city to live in in Texas.
- And of course, we are still the best city in the country for live music, and we are the reigning Live Music Capital of the World.

This is our city as it stands today. The state of our city is worth celebrating.

One of my favorite memories in my first years in office was going to Gus Garcia Young Men's Leadership Academy for the Annual Tie Ceremony. Mayor Garcia was Austin's first Latino Mayor. He was a great Austinite, he was my mentor, and he was a champion of equity, especially in education.

The school that bears his name continues his tradition of leadership. Every year, the older 8th

graders help the first-year middle schoolers tie what, for some of them, is the first tie they have ever owned. It is a symbol of the students' bond with each other.

I was supposed to help the younger students tie their ties, but I discovered pretty quickly I was unnecessary; the eight-graders - they had it covered. In fact, the new sixth-graders proudly helped me tie my tie. This very gold tie.

I have two grandchildren and there are two more on the way, a greater source of pride and joy than I could have ever imagined, greater even than being the mayor of the city that I love.

The young students at Gus Garcia, like mine, like all of our children and all our grandchildren, will inherit Austin years from now. And they will inherit the decisions we make and the culture and expectations we set.

And we have made hard choices these last eight years. Choices that disrupted our lives. They have disrupted the status quo. They have made tempers flare, and occasionally they have set us against each other.

We did that not because we seek conflict. It's easier and it is less disruptive, to try for only incremental change, sometimes to settle for half-measures, or even to kick a problem down the road entirely. Every city in America has examples of this, of hard choices deferred and deferred again until the hard choices became impossible ones.

I am so proud and grateful that on one difficult problem after another, the buck has stopped with us. The 10:1 Council has stood resolute and taken action, supported by the community, including on some of the most difficult challenges our city faces - mobility; social equity and justice; housing and homelessness.

We have pursued these priorities despite the disruption and the political havoc that follows; even while we were facing other decisions, great and small and hard and easy, that will shape Austin for generations; even while managing and overcoming an unprecedented succession of unique disasters and hardships presented these past eight years.

There is no statistics - however stellar - that can capture the story of the last eight years. It is a story of big plans, and the hard decisions that make them possible.

In 2014, that election cycle, when the 10:1 Council and I were first running for office, the dominant issue was mobility. And today, eight years later, we live in Austin's Golden Age of Mobility.

Our city is finally moving forward with a comprehensive, public mass transit system. Project Connect, a very long term project that is already underway, with neighborhood circulators in operation, the Pleasant Valley and Expo Center bus rapid transit lines and McKallaStation under construction, and the Blue and Orange light rail lines are in active planning. \$100M in

anti-displacement funding, a third of the twelve year total, has already been raised and turned over to the city, which has programmed \$20M already to buy up land near transit centers and corridors for future affordable housing.

We have a \$4 Billion project to double the size of Austin Bergstrom Airport. It's underway, with the first \$400 million being spent as we speak.

We have begun work to transform I-35, a \$6-9 Billion project that includes sinking and capping the main lanes.

Today we have over 400 miles of newly built or repaired sidewalks and safe routes to schools. Our bicycle network is expanding faster than any bicycle network in the country. And by 2025, we will have completed one of the largest bicycle networks in the country.

Throughout the city, our major corridors are safer, they are faster, and they are being transformed for 21st century travel.

It was the architect Daniel Burnham, in his lifetime, a man who shaped American cities perhaps probably more than anybody else, admonished us to "make no little plans, for they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will themselves not be realized."

And we have, in the past, made big plans for mobility. In the forty years before the 10:1 City Council was elected, there were five big mobility projects that stand out to me: Our airport moved. Research and Ben White Boulevards became Highways 71 and 183. SH130 was built to the east and MOPAC was built to the south.

That is a pretty good pace - for a small city. And it's fair to say that until recently we have sometimes been guilty of acting as if Austin were still the small city it has not been in a long time. But that era has passed, and Austin has put away childish things. A great city must make bigger plans; start them faster, and do more of them.

And over the past eight years, we have done just that. Austin did those first five big mobility projects over a forty year period and we're doing five in the last eight.

In the same year that the 10-1 Council and I were first running for office, the people of Austin were voting down a public mass transit mobility project for the second time in fifteen years.

Now, our charge was not to persuade the people of Austin that a big plan was necessary; it was to demonstrate that we properly understood the scale that was needed and to restore confidence that we could solve it at all. To present to Austin a plan that was worthy of a great city. To change our destiny by disrupting the status quo.

Our guiding light has been the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, adopted three years ago after a lot of work by a lot of people. It was the city's first multimodal, integrated, and comprehensive plan

for transportation. This visionary plan is foundational to our goal of long-term, sustainable change, and disruption, in seeing transportation not as an exercise in moving cars, but as a commitment to moving people.

We went to the people of the city, and we asked them to make big plans with us, and to face the hard decisions that come with them.

And our city did. And over the last eight years, the people of Austin have approved not one but four separate mobility initiatives - in 2016, 2018, and two in 2020 – raising revenues in excess of \$10 billion. Now this, in a city that had passed only a little bit more than half a billion dollars, cumulatively, in the previous twenty years.

These initiatives, combined with other city, county, state, and federal funds, have enabled us as of today to start work on over \$20 Billion in projects. That is a historic investment in tying our city together.

What we do now and where we have gotten today set the trajectory for where we will be tomorrow.

Our current path leads us to a city where owning a car, which is currently the second highest financial burden for Austin families, is optional.

Hundreds of thousands of Austinites are going to cross the city cheaply, cleanly, and quickly, without a car, thanks to a world-class light rail system, supported by expanded bus routes and service.

The homes and businesses of people who have lived in Austin for decades are going to stand side by side with new enterprises and performance venues and public spaces as some of our most important community hubs are our light rail stations.

Our global city will connect to the world through a new airport that is as large as our dreams and ambitions.

We will walk and bike, we will eat, we will shop, we will come together in public spaces that stand on top of a relic of deliberate segregation above a sunken and capped I-35.

Austin will be the most walkable city in Texas, with over 4,000 miles of sidewalk.

Our bicycle network will be one of the largest in the country and on par with New York City.

Because of the hard decisions that we have made, our children and grandchildren will inherit a city that is bound together with the new sinews of rail, road, and trail; that is a clear sign of Austin's strength and unity. Because our transportation system is a visible commitment to the

idea that Austin is more than just a collection of distant and disparate neighborhoods, we are more than just the sum of our parts.

Mobility is Austin's commitment to being a city.

Now, unity in a city is about more than the infrastructure that ties it all together. It is about a shared culture, a sense of spirit, of community. Austin has had, in my nearly five decades living here, a powerful sense of its obligation and responsibility to social equity and to justice. In the past 8 years, we have defended and we have preserved that spirit and, to an ever increasing degree, delivered that justice to those for whom it has too long been denied.

Today, Austin centers equity in almost everything we do, in almost every decision we make, to an extent that I believe is unmatched by any other city in the country.

Our city has committed \$300 Million to mitigate displacement, to promote affordability as a specific line item in Project Connect, and that is a scale unheard-of in a public mass transportation project.

We have doubled the city's investment in public health. We have committed to paid sick leave, Austin guarantees Fair Chance hiring, to help formerly incarcerated people restart their lives.

We're piloting guaranteed income to find a more efficient, just, and cost effective way to help keep families in their homes.

Our city prosecutes neither truancy nor the personal use of marijuana, both of which have been used historically to disproportionately incarcerate and bring communities of color into the justice system. We have helped cut the number of people held in the Travis County jail by 40%.

We have done as much or more than any city in the country to reimagine the concept of public safety, not just to talk about it, and to change the culture of our police force. We have enacted new ways of training police cadets, including community engagement and anti-racism training; we have changed the rules guiding when and where and how police use force; we have increased funding and training for mental health-related 911 calls.

Eight years ago, about 30% of our budget was devoted to building our city, with spending on social services, public health, parks and our quality of life. Today, it is almost 40%, and it's growing. And we've done this while still just passing the largest police department budget in the history of our city.

Our city leads among cities that honor and support the rights of our LGBTQIA+ residents, and Austin is, to the best of our ability, it will continue to be a place that is safe for transgender children. In their home, Austinites will not face investigation and prosecution if they choose to exercise their long-held right to an abortion.

These measures are emblematic of our city's belief in the dignity and worth of every Austinite. But belief is only as good as the action that backs it up. When the 10:1 Council took its seats on the dais, our city lacked the kind of infrastructure needed to ensure that equity and justice are at the heart of our government and everything that it does.

In our office, this work truly began with the Spirit of East Austin community conversation. This was an exploration of equity that empowered hundreds of East Austin residents to tell us, in their own words, what their dreams and ideas were. We asked all of Austin to "turn and face eastward", and to listen. Few remember that it was then that the term "Eastern Crescent" actually entered Austin's popular lexicon, helping to bring additional focus to a long-neglected part of the city.

We experienced progress, both here at City Hall and in our community, coming out of the Mayor's Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities, working with partners and advocates to ensure that city decisions confront and change, rather than ignore and perpetuate, the inequities of the past. That Task Force made about 270 recommendations to improve racial equity in Austin, more than half of which have been implemented. Thousands of Austinites have attended two-day equity and race training because of the expectation created by the Task Force (and Leadership Austin's leadership).

Those were not simple decisions, or easy conversations. There were people who refused to participate in the Task Force simply because of the use of the word "racism" in its name. It can be very hard to accept the extent to which institutional racism worms its way into so many facets not just of our country or of our city, but our neighborhoods and our lives.

This is especially true around policing, where the conversation turns to how people feel safe. When and where they feel safe. And who gets to feel safe. Communities across the country have torn themselves over this issue.

No wonder so many cities avoid this conversation, and the undeniable decisions that will follow entering that conversation.

Being an equitable city is not something you achieve - it is something that you decide every day. That is why we founded the Equity Office in the City of Austin. It's a permanent team to ensure that equity is integrated into every decision we make and everything our city government does.

It's why we started the LGBTQ Quality of Life Commission. The Civil Rights Office. The Office of Police Oversight.

And why we began the Reimagining Public Safety project.

The progress we have made in better realizing true public safety is a credit to the city, to the activists who stood their ground, and to the police leadership and officers who buy into the vision of an APD that works in partnership with the people of this city, where officers see

themselves as guardians, not warriors, and whose presence reassures everyone in the city that they are safe.

I cannot claim that Austin today has overcome the often iniquitous legacy of our past - that obviously is the work of generations - but I believe we can say with honesty that when America reached yet another critical moment in its long reckoning with our original sin of white supremacy, that Austin was not found wanting. That even though we knew that opponents of this reckoning, some with pretty big megaphones, would seize on our efforts and cynically mischaracterize them for their own political ends, we nonetheless faced the challenge for no reason other than that it was necessary, it was right, and it was long overdue.

OK, so Austin has often been at odds with the leaders of our state, and sometimes with the president of our country. These are not fights that we have sought - no one with a city to build would choose to spend focus and spirit on hard, exhausting, and needless political battles. But as elected leaders of this great city we are not free to turn away from those fights either, because to do so would yield the field. We are not free to turn away from those fights because it would betray the character of the good and decent people who entrusted us with these offices.

When Donald Trump ordered raids to round up undocumented immigrants, and expected cities to comply, we resisted instead. We fought lawsuits. I went to Washington and argued directly with the Attorney General, in his office, about the Administration's overreach. We stood with our friends in the Mexican Consulate to provide support and assistance to the people the former President wanted to persecute. There are not many cities like Austin, that spend public money on legal aid to ensure that fairness, and due process, and the rule of law still have meaning for all residents, regardless of their immigration status.

And while it is easy and tempting to pass the buck, and say that these are statewide or national issues, they are not. They are local. They are about the fear on our neighbor's faces when their mosque is vandalized, or when there is a knock on their door in the middle of the night and they wonder if they will be taken from their families.

That was the point of the ICE raids. It was the point of the Muslim travel ban. It is the point of the persecution of transgender people, it is the point of trying to claw back the right to abortion. It is the point of every one in a litany of outrages against good conscience and common decency. The point is to make people afraid, to make them wonder if their community is going to turn against them, to throw into doubt whether their neighbors truly recognize the full measure of their humanity.

And when our state or indeed our country has threatened the rights and dignity of our fellow Austinites, we have made it clear - and I will take this opportunity to say it again - that this is and will forever be a just and fair city, where all are welcome.

Each of us, in our time, are the trustees of Austin's spirit and soul. And just as we have done,

we challenge the generations who come after us to leave Austin an even more equitable; even more welcoming; more just, and more worthy place than it was when they found it.

Over the last eight years, I have had too many occasions to say, and it will still be true when our children and grandchildren inherit the city, probably:

“No legislature and no election can change who we are. The world can completely lose its mind around us and we are still going to be Austin, Texas.”

I said earlier that Austin holds itself to a really high standard; that we struggle to celebrate all that is great about it when we know that our city is in some way failing to live up to our collective vision of what we should really be. That aspiration and that ambition for Austin and each other, especially when realizing our better selves requires fundamental change, makes our disagreements all the more fiery, and fraught.

Nowhere have we seen this more than in providing for the fundamental human need for finding a place to call home.

Austin is in the middle of a housing supply and housing affordability crisis. This is an existential challenge. We are losing neighbors who can no longer afford to live here. With their loss, we lose the diversity that is our biggest asset – our people. There is much work to be done. This challenge looms large, and this City is fighting back.

Austin is poised to become the first major city in America to end homelessness.

Thanks to the continuing HEAL initiative, we have already moved hundreds of people without homes out of tents and off the streets.

Today, a veteran who loses their home in Austin has stable housing and services in less than 90 days.

We have reduced the number of children without homes and on our streets by more than half. Perhaps most critically, we have raised well more than 80% of the \$515 Million that are needed to fund the community driven fund, Finding Home ATX 3-year plan to get 3,000 more people into shelter and off our streets. This project, the work of a remarkable and broad coalition, puts Austin on the path to end homelessness for good. And by the way, you can help - findinghomeatx.org.

We have quadrupled our investment in affordable housing units in the city since just 2014. And we have invested more in the last six years than in the city's history up to that point. And it's still not enough. Last year, Austin built more housing than any city in the country - both in absolute numbers and numbers adjusted for population.

It is not a secret that we in Austin have not always seen eye to eye on how to help our fellow

residents who live without shelter.

Homelessness is not a recent creation. This is an issue that had been tearing up neighborhood associations and setting Austinites against each other for years. It is not a problem that lends itself to quick solutions. In fact, in the modern history of American cities, homelessness is the issue that is most often pushed out of sight and out of mind. And that was us.

But there are also enough cities on the West Coast that show us that, if homelessness is left unaddressed, thousands of people become tens of thousands of people. A difficult problem becomes unmanageable. That was going to be us.

I knew, as sure as I knew the sun would come up the next day, that if we did not act in bold and unprecedented ways, it would take us maybe six more years to be facing a spiraling crisis that would exceed the available will and resources we could possibly muster to address it.

So we chose instead to face the challenge and make the hard decisions.

The debate in this city over public camping brought out strong words, motivated by strong feelings. Decriminalizing public camping changed the way we thought about homelessness; it quite literally changed the way we saw it.

This was, of course, incredibly disruptive.

We could have, and should have, done a better job managing shared public spaces. And our failure to do so caused levels of anxiety and acrimony that could have been avoided to some degree. But the decision not to put people in jail, or hide them in the woods, simply for not having a place to live, was going to be fundamentally disruptive, regardless.

And without that disruption, we would have never come together to agree on a common solution. We would never have raised the funds we are raising now to get the job done. We would never have been, as we are today, the first American city our size that is poised to end homelessness.

But homelessness is just one aspect of our city's larger housing challenge. We talk a lot about affordability in this city (and indeed in this country). Housing is at the heart of it. This is, ultimately, a simple problem: we have too many buyers for too few houses where people want to live.

Our current land development code does not allow us to maximize the needed housing supply in the city. In the six years, the six disruptive years of CodeNext, the City Council twice voted to comprehensively change the Code, but was also twice sent back to the drawing board by the courts. Being willing to think big and make the hard and disruptive choices does not always work out, but you can't give up.

Recognizing the present limitations and the need for a broader consensus, the current Council has acted to trade greater density and supply for greater affordability. Final ordinances should be passed before the end of the year. We haven't given up.

The Council just before us also did not give up when they followed a failed \$80 Million housing bond with a successful \$65 Million housing bond just one year later in 2013.

Now, we could have learned two lessons from their experience: we could have concluded that the people of Austin did not want to make big investments in housing, and future proposals would need to be more modest.

Instead, we concluded that we should not set future investments with a focus on minimizing risks but by determining what the community truly needs to solve the problem, and then make that case strongly and clearly to voters, and trust the voters to make the right choice.

In 2018, we went to the city and asked not for \$65 Million or \$80 Million but for \$250 Million dollars to invest in affordable housing - and 72% of this city supported that effort.

This November, Austin voters will have the chance to approve another bond, this time for \$350 Million, to build even more affordable housing, to make repairs so that families can stay in their homes. We are facing an affordability and housing supply crisis and this bond is appropriate to the scale of the challenge we face.

By the way, there are two other bonds coming up that will be on the November ballot incidentally. Both of them also address affordability by calling for investments in public education and to our community college. Even as the city increases our supply of affordable housing, education is another key to affordability by helping people have more money to spend. So, the Austin of the future must keep and care for its people. When we confront the issues of housing and homelessness, we are deciding who we are. We're deciding who we will be. This is about the very spirit and soul of our city. If so many people want to live in Austin that it becomes impossible for anyone except the rich, we will not be Austin, Texas.

If we lose our diversity and our creativity, we will no longer be an Austin that creates art in everything that we do.

If the young leaders of Gus Garcia, and all of their generation, cannot afford to live in Austin, we won't be an Austin to be proud of.

Austin ensures its future if it honestly confronts its present. Now that's not easy, because the solutions need to be as big as the challenges we face. It is hard, and it requires us to confront base cultural and political differences in our city.

It will be disruptive, because it pulls at the threads of our community, and encourages us not only to disagree, but to distrust each other's motives.

Austin must live up to this challenge, because we simply must ensure that our children and grandchildren inherit a city where everyone can not only survive, but thrive.

If we had only as a city confronted mobility, and social equity, and housing and homelessness, we could justifiably be proud of the work we've done over the last eight years. But we did all three.

And we did much more besides, because a city will not simply stop while we address a few problems. And there have been many others that have demanded our focus and our spirit. The present state of our city today reflects the broad agenda on which the 10:1 Council has delivered. It is making good on the promise, the potential, the hopes and dreams of this new governmental system.

Austin continues to be an international leader on climate change mitigation. We have a 100 Year Water Plan. 78% of our city's energy is carbon-free, on track to reach 100% by 2035.

Electric vehicle charging stations and composting reach to every corner of this city.

We have cleared a four-year backlog of DNA rape kits, we have invested in victim services and a new domestic violence shelter.

We have raised the City Living Wage twice, last week to \$20/hour. Thousands of clean manufacturing jobs have been brought here to help people and families move out of poverty.

And we have a soccer team. Thank you to La Murga. And we have a stadium.

Heck, we even started a taco war and we won.

But we removed the Confederate flag from the Veterans Day Parade.

We helped create the Waterloo Greenway park - our own High Line linear park that could be the only thing that people remember about us 100 years from now.

We cut the ribbon on our new Downtown Library, Austin's cathedral to our intellectual and cultural traditions.

We have our first ever Wildfire Preparedness Plans.

We created and implemented the country's model for preserving workforce housing.

We supported our artists and artistic venues at historic levels.

Our city's reputation for innovation is unmatched.

And all this we have done, without city taxes and fees going up more than 2.2% on average over the last eight years, unless you count Project Connect, but it is still under 3% if you do.

All this while still developing and executing big plans on mobility, social equity, and housing and homelessness. And even more remarkable is that we did these things despite a previously-unimaginable sequence of disasters and crises that have come to this city over the last eight years.

In 2015 we had a record drought and an historic flood.

In 2016 we saw the rise of an extreme and hostile politics that profoundly, and perhaps permanently, damaged our understanding of our country and each other.

In 2017, we were forced to fight in court both the Governor of Texas and the President of the United States.

In 2018, we faced a serial bomber. And another 100-year storm.

In 2019, we faced a water crisis - this time brought about by zebra mussels, of all things.

In 2020, our city, and our country, and our world stopped for COVID. And that summer became a reckoning for America's sins.

In 2021, we had Winter Storm Uri. And when that passed, we were left to face the enormous political turbulence and disruption of the Big Lie, a threat to our very democracy.

COVID is the disaster that hangs over us the longest, that most imperiled our economy and our health. For two years we have been isolated. Our children, for a long time, didn't go to school. Those that were able, didn't go to work. Businesses closed - some permanently. Our friends and family got sick around us - some of them dying.

We had to spend so much time and resources fighting to keep our community safe. We fought the Governor in court for the right to protect ourselves; and sometimes, it's gotta be said, we fought each other over how to manage the danger and how to cope with the trauma.

But we endured. Even with everything else going on, we had a job to do, and we did it. Some things only become clear after the fact, and some truths can only be seen in the numbers.

We lost people in Austin to COVID, each of whom was a person, each of whom was somebody important to someone else. It neither disrespects nor diminishes our grief to say that in the midst of that tragedy, Austinites did something that was truly remarkable.

The rate at which Austinites died of COVID was half of that in the state as a whole.

We masked up. We washed our hands. We isolated when we needed to. We got vaccinated. We protected ourselves and we protected each other.

If the rest of the state had protected lives at the same rate we did, 45,000 Texans would still be alive today.

Now, these crises could have derailed all our other efforts. Sapped our focus and our will.

But we did not falter. We held fast, without wavering, to the hope that we confess, our eyes on the future we want for our city, and we made the hard and difficult decisions to get there.

Because this is the Austin way.

If we retreat from the progress we have made or if we don't confront and own our most serious challenges - if we nibble at problems, rather than facing them head on; if we shy away from the cost and conflict and disruption that attend anything important enough to be worth doing - we imperil the future we seek.

For the sake of that future:

We've got to fix the Land Development Code to unlock the needed housing supply.

We must reinvent the development process, so that building in Austin no longer costs too much and takes too long. And if our only choice is to add to the cost and make it faster, or cut costs but then it becomes slower, then we're doing something fundamentally wrong and we need an entirely new and different way.

We need to realize the South Central Waterfront, the Palm District Plan, and the Colony Park neighborhood, and the expanded Convention Center.

In this city, we must enact tuition-free community college, in service of enabling every Austinite to earn a living wage.

While we're at it, in this city we should have free and universal childcare. An historic commitment to the competitiveness of our city and the wellbeing of our families.

We must do what is necessary for Austin-San Antonio to be the next great US metroplex.

Now, true, these are big plans, big goals. The kind of plans that shape the future of the city and everyone who lives in it. Some would be disruptive. All of them would be hard.

But none of them are bigger, none of them require harder decisions, none of them are more disruptive than what we have already done together in the past eight years.

Austin is a city that can make big plans, the kind that inspire us, the kind that move our blood. But this is a choice that cities make. If the last eight years are remembered for anything, let it be that we confronted our biggest challenges, head on, without reservation. That we met big problems with big solutions. That we made hard decisions. That we weren't afraid of disruption, that we paid the necessary price in focus, spirit, and political capital.

We do these things so that our children and grandchildren can inherit a great city, with its spirit and its soul intact.

[I want you to remember this in the days ahead,] because there are forces abroad in our politics that will ask you to forget what we did, and why we did it.

Extremism, distrust, and misinformation. Some of which ask you to believe things that aren't true, and all of which ask you - ultimately - not to believe.

To trivialize the idea that we are even capable of making big plans and hard decisions. To forget all that we have accomplished together. And to dismiss as nonsense, what we know as truth - that we are a living community, bonded by common dreams and graced with a shared destiny.

If we hold fast to the belief in ourselves - confident that there is no challenge bigger than our Imagination; no decision harder than our resolve; if we believe in Austin and each other, we will pass through all the turmoils we may face, and deliver for future generations the city that they deserve.

Being Mayor of this magical place, the third longest-serving mayor in its history, has been an honor beyond description. I love this city, and I always will. [And while there's more work I still need to get done,] I will leave my office in January with a glad heart. Because I believe that today's Austin is a little bit more just and a little bit more prepared than the city we inherited. And the city we leave to our children and grandchildren is one they will be proud to call home.

We have done this together, in the short time that we have been its trustees. I am grateful for the wisdom, and kindness, and support that you have shared with me these eight years. And I am humbled by the courage and the grit and the grace and the love Austinites show for their city and for each other.

Thank you. Thank you all. Thank you, Austin.