

Prelude

Thank you so much, First Lady Liz, and thank you, Sandia High School JROTC's honor guard, Aria Hernandez for that national anthem and finally-Christine Duncan Heritage Academy — wonderful kids — thank you for doing our pledge of allegiance. Today we gather at a special place, a new place; take a look at this view and this incredible facility to celebrate the Mother Road, Route 66 on its 100th anniversary!

Today also mark's my *ninth* State of the City address. I'm grateful for a historic third term, and it is never lost on me the trust voters put in our commitment to seeing through our toughest challenges. Now, normally I would build on a theme and tell you what we have done to lift up the Duke City and what we are planning to do in the future. I'd start with how we fixed "the broken-down car" that was city government when we came in, reformed APD, saved the Rail Yards and built, just in the nick of time, the nation's first fully integrated alternative 911 response continuum, connecting street outreach to shelter, services, and ultimately housing — what we call the Community Safety Department and the Gateway System.

Instead of that, we are going to do something different, something I actually haven't seen before, but something I think is critical at this time in our City's long history. Let's step back and tackle some core questions, deep issues facing each of us, and see what's behind that and what is critical to actually lifting up Albuquerque.

Since I got started in New Mexico public service, now almost 20 years ago, there has been one single through-line, a line I've never fully connected, a line I never ran on, a line I have never shared, a line that cuts right to the core of who we are. Questions like, why are things getting harder in our lives? Why do we always struggle? How do we build on what makes us unique and special? That is what we will start with today.

So, let's dive in. I've got no applause lines, no speech to read. I'm sure I'll offend someone, upset a politician or two, but this is not about you, not about me, it's about US together. Let's answer some core questions that vex us today and get to a theory of change for tomorrow.

Prologue: Why are we here? We are a City at the Crossroads

Take look at that road, the Mother Road, and we are reminded of our city's own origin story. Route 66 isn't the first crossroads in this place. Why has there been a community in this spot, in the high desert since time immemorial? It is because we are, and have always been, a city at the crossroads. Before there were paved streets, a railroad, and a Sunport, there was a river and trail between the Manzanos and Sandias. This is the only place where the Rio Grande meets the gateway to the plains to the east through Tijeras Canyon and to the west across the high desert plateau. This is why Indigenous

civilizations set up pueblos here in the first place — we sit at the crossroads between a life-sustaining river and a trade route.

We have seen this theme repeated through our history, over and over, right up to today. We had another great road, historically even more impactful than Route 66: El Camino Real, which connected Mexico City and Albuquerque, and brought 200 years of Hispanic religion, people, and culture. Then we had another, the Santa Fe Trail, and when railroad tracks reached Albuquerque they connected us to a rapidly expanding national economy and helped launch an economic boom, bringing new businesses, workers, and investments, and ushering in a new Anglo-American chapter in our story. Route 66 followed, and finally the interstates, the Sunport, and our intermodal transportation hub — bringing that history into the modern era, reinforcing Albuquerque's role as a city at the crossroads.

What Is Our Core Strength? Resilience, a Role Model for Modern America

This history is a physical, literal story, but more importantly this history is a story that shaped who we are as people, as Burqueños, in this place. This is also a story of the transition of cultures, of two colonizations; of war, destruction and loss, pain and trauma. Today we don't always grasp the reality of this history, but it is actually all around us. Today we see it, this land to my right, once part of the historic Spanish Atrisco Land Grant, and now at the center of a contentious conversation about Albuquerque's growth and development; to the Sandias, now under renewed scrutiny from historical tribal land claims, and of course Onate statues, the source of two shootings in five years. For us, history doesn't always leave scars that simply fade, it can leave scabs, wounds that may look healed but can still bleed when provoked.

Despite this history, unlike almost anywhere in America, we created something special: a community we call Albuquerque that somehow didn't lose the culture or the people during all these transitions at our crossroads. We didn't fully assimilate into a melting pot; we did something different. We actually retained core cultural components of each slice of our history. We are here because we first survived, then we found a way to live together, and now we actually celebrate what makes us different. We held onto two cultures that others lost. We withstood threats to "our way of life," and we endured, modernized without selling out, and without ever compromising our authentic self. We demonstrated a kind of resilience that enabled our unique cultural identity.

How did we do this? At each crossroads we kept our culture, and in large part our land and families, intact. Look all around us: Our architecture, food, symbols, art, and families are still strong and reflect our Native American and Hispanic history. But this was not easy. There was trauma; there are still wounds. Land was taken, boarding schools separated children from their families, language eradication was attempted. Yet we didn't just endure; we clung to our families, to our small communities. We fought to protect our resources, our land, and our water. At each crossroads there were new laws, new power dynamics, and new technologies. We also retained the political structures of each culture at our

crossroads. Land grants, tribal governments, acequias, even Spanish guarantees in our constitution are embedded in our modern government. We learned how to share scarce resources and power in ways that kept us together despite turmoil all around us. We are undeniably resilient!

It's these factors that form the foundation of our resilience. That is our core strength. We survived colonization, generations of federal policies imposed upon us, and profound change, and yet we are still here, holding on to the identity, culture, and character that have always defined us. In this way we are a role model for America: We represent a place where people can be very different and get along, and build a community together not just despite our differences, but by cherishing them.

Why Do We Struggle? The Other Side of Resilience, a Scarcity Mindset

Still, why do we have so many challenges today if we are so resilient and so awesome? Why are we rated at the bottom of education, health, income, opportunity — and have been most of the modern era? That is the question everyone asks who is new here, what's up with this place? Why are there so many challenges? Why can't you all achieve your potential?

That answer is the other side of resilience: You can't be resilient, you can't prosper let alone survive in this place without a scarcity mindset. To be resilient we have had to also adopt a scarcity mindset that comes from a zero-sum game for resources. Water, money, jobs, land — it's about getting what you need and protecting it. Scarcity lives underneath our public policy, our business community, our schools, our governments. It works against a bias toward action: Scarcity thinking operates as a bias toward reducing risk, hunkering down, and riding it out. During tough times there are few places that do better; during good times we struggle to keep up.

You might think this is a stretch, but we see this all around us — so much so that we don't even notice how pervasive, how out of the ordinary it is compared to other places. One way to keep power and tradition through historic transitions was to retain power structures from each dominant society. So we kept governments from three cultures because we needed all three to protect and ensure each culture. Today, just in our City alone, we have at least 15 forms of local government. AMAFCA, MRGCD, MRCOG, UNM, State Fair, acequias, tribal governments, the county, the city, land grants, power and water utility easements, the State Land Office, federal highway rights. It's our nature to add more layers of bureaucracy and never to remove any; this underneath our resistance to any form of needed consolidation (city and county, state-enabled zoning).

Another hallmark of the scarcity mindset lives in our policies toward public money and resources. We carve up state and city capital dollars equally so we can keep the peace. Never mind who needs it most or what's most important; we just divide it into equal portions. Whenever another area of town or the state gets funding and we didn't, our reaction is, "I gotta get mine," "my people deserve x too." I remember in the Senate we wanted to build a National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, but we couldn't get the votes until we also agreed to the Farm and Ranch Museum down south. I like both,

but when we can only afford one nice thing, we end up getting nothing. We see this all the time, the fights over the soccer stadium, an aquatics center, housing projects that we either want or don't want in OUR neighborhood. We must rise above just trying to get our piece of the pie, just trying to get what we want, and start thinking of the city as whole.

When times are tough, we also know what to do with money: We save it. Our government's approach to our taxpayer money has been to save it, for a century. It makes sense. In New Mexico we don't have a lot of wealth, so we save our surpluses for a rainy day, or for the next generation when oil and gas dries up. This policy is rational, conservative, prudent, and one day might be the right choice.

But should we really continue this scarcity mindset policy today? Right now we have some of largest savings accounts in the world. In the last five years our state has run up massive surpluses; our permanent funds now total \$71 billion. We have an extra 3 billion, ~30%+ extra we save in reserves every year! I remember when I was a state senator, we were glad to save 10%. What do we do with all this money? We invest it out of state, in Wall Street, in private equity all over the world. Meanwhile we hold a pittance, a few million for local investment.

Think about that. We are literally investing billions in Silicon Valley, California; in Boston, Massachusetts; and New York every year! And yet looking around our city and state, we see crumbling roads, schools short PE equipment and coaches, APS and UNM's consistent need for more funding, a massive lack of housing, lack of capital for businesses, a shortage of pretty much everything. Imagine what we could do with just a slice of our annual reserves, just using 15% of the annual surplus would mean half a billion every year for kids, for addiction, for UNM, for our schools! Yet our own scarcity mindset prevents this from being even entertained in public discourse. Our general savings mentality has been bipartisan and universal for the last 100 years! Scarcity pervades our tax policy as well. We "look out for our own interests" by having so many tax loopholes, so we can each have one, that all our taxes are 20% higher just to pay for all our individual tax breaks.

At the City, we are definitely part of the scarcity mindset problem. We protect and hoard our assets "just in case we need them in the future." We have hundreds of pieces of land, unused or barely used buildings, all for that day in the distant future when we might actually "need" them. We also overprotect the nice things we have. We make it unbelievably hard to rent our community centers for a birthday party or anniversary. We make it tough to book parks, use sports facilities on off hours, start businesses — everything involves a maze of complicated steps or permitting. You can't even build a pool or fix your porch in this town without the City saying "yes." Why do we do this? We have infinite patience because we are worried about everything: from liability, insurance and property damage to public health. We have a scarcity mindset that comes from a world where we had to do everything we could just to survive, to balance a budget, but also making sure that we mitigated risk in every way.

Lastly, this mindset pervades not just government; it's part of our business culture and our approach to family longevity. We are so patient with our land: Families sit on land unused for generations, just waiting for when they might really need it. About $\frac{1}{3}$ of downtown — some of the best properties — are owned by second- and third-generation families that don't even live here anymore. Meanwhile we suffer a blighted downtown that we struggle to revitalize. And when we are presented with a new idea, something bold that might really help our city, we find a reason to kill it.

We all know we have needed a stadium of some sort for 30 years, but we will find a reason to kill whatever the latest idea is. We know we need more housing, but we find reasons to say, "not in my backyard," because it might threaten our situation or increase risk for us. We say we love the Rail Trail — another 30-year-old great idea — but we rail against it because it will increase the number of people in Old Town. That is the definition of scarcity thinking. We even see the scarcity mindset when things go well; we are *surprised* when anything goes well, when Lobos break .500, when a home-grown company actually expands and succeeds, when people want to move here.

How Can We Move From a Scarcity Mindset to an Abundance Mindset?

We have to understand the connection between public safety and scarcity, and we have to admit that government is part of the problem right now.

Scarcity makes us more sensitive to physical danger — personal safety. Our lives are tough enough that when we feel unsafe walking down the street, in parking lots, on the bus, or dropping off our kids at school, it just adds to our pessimism. You can't move from a scarcity mindset focused on survival to one of growth and abundance when you're scared. Public safety is a necessary precursor to any form of abundance.

On top of personal insecurity, government isn't really helping make our lives better. Whether it was when lands were taken, or the Rail Trail going up behind your house, PNM power lines blocking your view, your business license form taking three hours, or renting a gym for your kid's basketball practice, government just adds costs, friction; slows us down and gobbles up time with red tape. In dozens of small ways, government all too often takes its toll, making daily life just that much harder. Engaging in government feels less like empowerment and more like a burden. This friction fuels a cycle of burnout, civic withdrawal, and historic distrust.

In the end we are left with a mindset that has created deep emotional threads that run through our community: fear and quiet desperation in many of our lives, and a belief that government can't or won't help. Add personal safety concerns on top of government's inability to be helpful, and it's no wonder we start to run from risk, resist new ideas, and see innovation as threatening. So we hunker down and tell ourselves, "It's just me and my family, and we will make it work. We will figure it out," but it just gets harder and harder every day.

And it's not just us. There is an underlying current dragging down American democracy. It is slower but just as deadly and destructive as the shootings, addiction, or even the cost of living. It is the failure of our institutions to actually **help** with everyday problems we all face. Indifference or inaction on kitchen table issues has perpetuated a slow decay in our daily experience. This problem afflicts vulnerable people the most as they have little to turn to other than government. This is the slow destruction of a child falling behind, an entrepreneur buried in fees and regulations, a school trailing the rest of the world, a family without a stable home, a person precluded from a job because of their health, an addict with literally no way out. This is the breaking of the American spirit.

Theory of Change: From Scarcity to Abundance

You know, being Mayor, being born and raised here — and raising our kids in public schools — makes life a bit of a roving town hall. Everywhere I go, the discussion about the City continues. One reason I'm so passionate about this work is because of what I hear from so many everyday people here: in line at Smith's, on the sidelines of my kids' sports games. In those conversations is truth, and it goes something like this:

Gradually my life is getting worse, and my eyes, my pocketbook, and my social media reinforce that. I make less money; costs for me are higher; there are fewer opportunities; and I feel unsafe driving, walking, and doing business in my city. This actually scares me, because I'm also afraid that my situation isn't going to get any better.

Nationally this is all reinforced with a disappearing safety net, inflation, aging demographics that are disproportionately more sensitive, social media, federal firings, federal cuts — all compounding a scarcity mindset and a dim reality. Then folks say something like this:

Government doesn't seem to matter or is contributing to making things worse. I want a city that helps ease my pain, that helps my everyday life be just a little better in these tough times, I want a government that defends and protects us personally, but also from all this horrible stuff that is going on in D.C. I want to believe in Albuquerque. I want a government that builds my faith that this is a strong and resilient place, and where I see a future brighter than today.

Albuquerque, we CAN DO THIS. This is what I'm dedicating the next three and half years of my life to. First, we have to get our own approach to policy into an abundance mindset and rebuild our civic muscle to get things done. Second, we have to restore the broadest notion of public safety for everyone who lives here: from those on the street, to those running businesses, to our shared public spaces. Third, we must demonstrate how city government can actually be helpful and reduce the grind and friction on everyday life.

The City's Abundance Agenda

We must restore the broadest feeling of safety and security. This must come first. Without it, all other efforts and results are overshadowed. Because of historic scarcity and our natural desire to “feel safe” (Maslow’s hierarchy of needs), we are held back on our journey toward abundance. “Safe” must apply to ALL people: from business commuters to the homeless; to immigrants; to families walking in a parking lot, or enjoying everyday life in the City- shopping, getting dinner downtown, enjoying a picnic in a park with their family.

Then we must prove that city government is literally helpful in everyday life: not burdensome, not adding to the pain, the cost of living, to the fear afflicting us. The cost of living isn’t just about the price of things — it’s also about the cost of people’s time and the burdens we place on them, whether that’s waiting for a government permit or navigating an unnecessarily complicated process. It is also about not restricting our options and our freedom of choice; not telling people what they have to do, how to pay for things (card, online only), what to eat, to wear, where to go — it’s about freedom and creating options to choose from.

By giving people more choices, sharing public assets more broadly, and making every day processes easier, we can reduce the friction of daily life and restore a sense of hope so that whatever is happening in the nation or the world, we live in a city that really works for us. That is our City abundance agenda! That we all feel safer and feel better about City government because it is actually helpful in our everyday life. This is our answer to scarcity: It is about abundance, sharing all the resources we do have, and easing the pain we feel in everyday city life.

The Cost of Living Is More Than Dollars and Cents: It’s Time and Frustration

So here is how we start. First, there are the cost-of-living issues creating real scarcity. We know that rent has doubled since COVID, gas and utilities are too expensive, and healthcare costs continue to skyrocket. But cost of living is more than paying bills. It’s also about the time these necessary tasks take away from our lives: the hours and hours of waiting in line, filling out paperwork, that drain precious hours from our day. Government must reduce the amount of time it steals from us daily. It’s also about the frustration we see when basic things aren’t done by government. With temperatures hovering around 100 degrees for weeks, we made it illegal for landlords to fail to provide working air conditioning. Yet we know enforcement has been a challenge, and few things are more frustrating than not having air conditioning when you’re supposed to, and feeling like government isn’t doing its job. That’s why strong rental protections are more important than ever. They’re an essential part of a broader strategy to lower the cost of living, ease the pressures of everyday life, and do what good government should do: make life a little easier for you.

Democratizing Housing: Freedom to Choose What Is Your “Home”

One of the most challenging aspects of cost of living is housing and rental prices. We have built close to 7,000 new units of housing and legalized casitas, but it’s not enough. We need both more types of housing and in more zones throughout the City. In 2026 we reduced parking requirements, increased allowable heights around transit and main corridors, and relaxed zoning to enable more housing. But we still “tell” people what a “home” should be. What a great example of the shift we must make: *You* should decide what kind of house you want. Duplex, casita, condo, cottage, boxable — the material and method shouldn’t matter, yet we continue to indirectly “ban” all sorts of alternative types of housing because of our zoning and building codes. It’s time to democratize housing and give you the choice of what your home should be made of and what type it should be. If we actually do this, if we let go of telling you home ownership is a single-family house with a garage and backyard, we can lead the nation in home ownership!

Food Abundance: ABQ Fresh and the Backyard Exchange

When it comes to food costs and access, we live in the desert, and we have food deserts all over our city. Yet we also have lots of small farmers, backyard gardens, and folks growing their own food at the same time we’re seeing the federal government cutting SNAP and nutritional support. The City launched ABQ Fresh through an executive order last winter, which aims to build a stronger local food economy by helping regional farmers develop new sustainable business models and creating reliable markets for what they grow. That means using the City’s purchasing power to become a long-term institutional partner, offering longer contracts that provide greater predictability and help farmers weather seasonal instability while opening new pathways for local growers to sell directly into our neighborhoods. And we’re bringing infrastructure directly into our neighborhoods by identifying City-held vacant land, assessing its highest and best community use, and opening appropriate properties to farmers and local organizations for urban agriculture and community gardens. The goal is to grow the farmer economy, make locally grown food a viable and lasting business, and keep more of our own incredible food here — in our City — circulating through our neighborhoods, families, and local economy.

We also have folks growing more produce than they need and thousands of backyard chickens laying eggs — more than they can consume, and we have people who need them! So we are starting the “Backyard Harvest” program to bridge the supply and demand best we can of eggs and produce. In short, anyone with extra produce from their farm or garden can bring it to one of our health and social service centers in each quadrant of the city. Then anyone wanting free eggs or produce can pick it up there, as well as access social services and other ways the city can help support their family. So join us, as harvest approaches, bring in what you don’t need, and come get what you do need, help us ease the cost burden and lack of SNAP funding in the Duke City. This is just the start of our broader effort to enhance our local food system and build a circular economy.

Affordability Also Means Being Able to Afford More

The other side of the affordability equation is working to grow our economy in a way that lifts all of us up. We have the chance to build on our unique competitive advantage around things like quantum, fusion, and directed energy. And through tools like community benefits agreements, we can ensure that economic growth helps the people who live here — keeping investment local; guaranteeing meaningful reinvestment in our communities; creating good jobs for people from all walks of life; and protecting our water, our land, and our people from being exploited.

For businesses, we can go full throttle on regulatory justice: cutting red tape, shortening wait times, and making it faster and easier to start, grow, and do business here. From opening a food truck to launching your own consulting firm, redoing your porch to repairing your roof, the city makes you wait, wait, and redo things over and over. We are now looking at this differently, using technology like drones to get roof inspections done in a matter of days. Preapproving construction plans for projects. Shining a light on how to best sync with the water authority, AMAFCA, and NMDOT in the entitlement process. And on small projects we are just saying “start!” Don’t wait for the city. Do what you want to do. It’s your property and your work, so schedule an inspection and check your work at the end. This is how to practice a bias toward action as a city — by not holding you up at the beginning. We are switching the default to “yes,” Instead of “wait for city to start” It’s “start, and the city will catch up.”

Democratizing City Land, Land Back

When you drive around our city, whether it’s on major roads or deep in neighborhoods, we all see the vast parcels of land sitting there unused, land inexplicably “waiting” for someone to do something with it. As a kid these were places I would ride by on my bike, maybe shoot off a few fireworks. But today folks need that land, and it could be used for anything — from desperately needed housing, a park or community garden, a new church or temple, or a new home for a local business. Part of pushing back on our scarcity mindset is sharing what we don’t actually need: That is an abundance mindset in practice. It turns out a lot of this land is owned by the city, and we don’t need it. We’ve been sitting on it for generations, and at this point are just hoarding it for whatever 100-year eventuality might come our way. But this is your land, taxpayer land, and it’s time we democratize it and give you the freedom to use it!

This fall we will be rolling out processes that let residents buy, rent, or use hundreds of these properties for next to nothing in exchange for putting them to work for the public good. For example, for \$1 a year we’ll let folks use land for community gardens as long as they take care of it. We’ll give folks the land as long as they build affordable housing in two years. We’ll sell land that folks want right away. We’ll let them use the land as long as it is reactivated and maintained for the benefit of our community. So take us up on the offer, Albuquerque. Take your land back and put it to good use for our city!

Democratizing City Space for Childcare

Similarly, I can't help but notice the city-owned buildings not fully used or empty, and compare that to the calls I hear from residents who need office space, space for childcare, for healthcare, or other services in our community. So we are going to do the same thing with our empty buildings. They're yours to use. In exchange for a nominal lease and responsibility for basic upkeep and management, we'll open these facilities to the community rather than leave valuable public assets sitting empty. Stay tuned for lists of dozens of spaces that we are going to open up to you, to re-energize and serve the neighborhoods around them.

One critical example of this is childcare. Our state has done a great job covering the cost of childcare for us! But now we have a shortage of childcare providers, and folks who want to start taking care of kids need space to start or expand their businesses. This is where we come in. Many of our City facilities are staffed by employees who would benefit from onsite childcare, and we have community spaces that could be put to better use by converting portions of them into early childhood centers! This is how we demonstrate abundance for moms and dads today, and for the next generation of Burquenos!

Reducing Friction on Families

On a more personal scale, daily life in our city has its grinds as well, especially for families. Seemingly simple activities like kid sports and family celebrations are tougher than they used to be. Mostly it's because everything costs more, whether it's a trip to one of our great family fun centers, Cliff's, or the movies. But it's also about access. Our incredible youth sports complexes are packed, and teams looking for a place to practice often find there's simply no space available, or that the space they can find costs an arm and a leg.

When you want to celebrate a birthday, we have so many great city pools and community centers, but they're closed on Sundays when you need them. When your family has an anniversary or quinceañera, hotels are expensive, and city facilities are all closed at night. So families bear the burden. Even weddings have become harder. There are plenty of beautiful places, but they're often booked years in advance or simply too expensive. All of these little barriers add up, creating friction that slowly wears down family life. Affordable places to gather, play, celebrate, and spend time together have become too scarce. It's time for the city to help change that!

We are rolling out broad guidelines so you can use our facilities at night and on Sundays, and we are looking at all city spaces, from the Kimo and other theaters to parks and museums, and determining how we can make them more accessible more often for birthdays, graduations, and everything in between. And sports too: We want our gyms to be used as much as possible, seven days a week by everyone wanting to put them to good use. Naturally we are going to ask folks to chip in and cover the cost of overtime or sign some waivers, but it will be well below the cost of private venues, a low-cost public alternative for family events and sports teams to practice.

Lastly, we found out how powerful creating free iconic places for families can be. Anyone who's been to the Daniel Webster Ninja Warrior course, raced down the Juan Tabo hills, or sipped a margarita while the kids play at the new aquarium splash pad knows: When we get these spaces right, tens of thousands of families show up and make them iconic parts of our city. Even the old Rail Yards, now home to the state's largest farmers market and an iconic Shepard Fairey mural, draws thousands of people every Sunday simply to gather, connect, and enjoy being part of a community.

Nowhere is this truer than the sheer joy of the new Wells Park. This place is packed on weekends and evenings. People drive in from all over the metro to check out the slides and play roller derby or pickleball. Its magnetism is so strong that it's lifting up the entire Wells Park neighborhood and transforming how people think about living near downtown, and IT'S SAFE. Next up we are going to give Tingley Beach a needed refresh, finish as massive new park on Central near the new International District Library, open the CNM Film Academy at the Rail Yards, push forward on the transformational Rail Trail, and open the first new multigenerational center in the north westside.

Abundance Requires Personal and Communal Safety

Now, I know that none of these places "work" unless they are safe. Our police department continues to drive crime down, and we know we have long way to go, but our combination of technology and civilianization is working. Our alternative police response, the Albuquerque Community Safety Department, or ACS, is now transporting 600 people a month from the streets into services. To date they have taken 140,496 calls that APD didn't have to, giving the right response at the right time to those suffering from behavioral health issues. And the Gateway System of Care is up and running, serving an average of 1,000 people every single night. Last year, 688 of them were veterans, and 2,400 were older adults in their 70s, 80s, and 90s. We have increased capacity by 27% this year, serving more unhoused women, men, and kids. The Young Adult Gateway facility is housing 41 young people already and expanding to serve 71 total. Gateway Family is serving 200 family members per night, 56% of whom are children 17 and below. Our medical sobering, addiction recovery, and medical respite are providing critical care every day and keeping hundreds off our streets and guiding them into long-term recovery. Our housing navigation centers now have 100 folks in line for stable housing. We have even diverted 2,000 people from hospital emergency rooms into the Gateway System. Through our Better Way Forward program, we've hired nearly 100 people experiencing homelessness, providing meaningful work while helping keep our city clean and cared for.

Yet, we see what we see on our streets. We see the suffering, the trash, the instability, and the devastating toll of addiction. Fentanyl continues to tear through our community, taking lives, fueling homelessness and violence, and placing enormous pressure on every system we have built to respond. This drug crisis is one of the greatest challenges facing our city, and all of us ultimately bear its human, social, and financial costs. We know we have a housing shortage, and we know we have issues with unhoused folks, but as a city, a state, and a nation, we are losing the battle against fentanyl and

dangerous street drugs. And the damage goes beyond addiction itself. When drugs and the chaos that comes with them take over our streets and neighborhoods, they pull us apart. A person who is afraid to walk outside at night, take their kids to the park, or connect with their neighbors is effectively isolated from their own community. But even drugs are, in part, a symptom of a community held back by real scarcity. Scarcity of stable housing. Scarcity of treatment when someone is ready for it. Scarcity of good jobs, opportunity, safe places to gather, and meaningful connection. Scarcity of hope that tomorrow can actually be better than today.

Addiction thrives in that scarcity. We have to fight the conditions that allow addiction to flourish. A safer city is not just a city with fewer drugs; it's a city with more of the things that make people want to participate in life. When people feel disconnected from opportunity, family, and community, drugs can fill that void. That's why we must build another Recovery Gateway, go all in on diversion that moves people off the streets and into treatment, and not give up on creating safe, managed outdoor spaces where people can stabilize in greater safety and dignity than living on our streets.

This year we're taking a new approach to making our streets safer — for people confronting crime and addiction, for people experiencing homelessness, and for every resident who simply wants to walk down the sidewalk, enjoy a park, or open the doors of their business and feel safe doing it. We are going to commit to a clear set of principles: a social compact that says we can do better than leaving people to suffer on our streets. We will provide safe alternatives, clear pathways to treatment, and the support necessary to move people struggling with addiction toward recovery and stability. This approach not only honors the dignity and humanity of people battling addiction by offering treatment instead of abandonment, it also affirms who we are as a city, reflecting our own dignity, compassion, and shared values as a community. This means making sure we always have a bed available for someone who wants it, making sure we always offer transportation and ensuring core belongings are saved and protected, and it means providing a real path for transition from the street to housing. But this approach must be balanced to work for all of us. It also means that we will restore public spaces for all of us. It is not illegal to sit on a park bench. But it is illegal to block the entrance to a business, camp on our bike trails, or use drugs on our buses. This is difficult work because we have to hold two principles at the same time: compassion for people who are suffering and a commitment to safety and restoring shared public spaces for everyone.

Abundance Can't Be Achieved Alone

The biggest challenge is that I can't do this alone, and City government can't do it alone. Building a city of abundance will take every level of government, and it will take all of us. So to everyone hearing this today: I'm asking you to join me, to put in the work, challenge the scarcity mindset, and help build a city where we believe more is possible — and then make it possible!

Let's reflect on our own mindset: We are the richest, poor state in the union. That is just a fact, meaning that we know we have had intergenerational poverty for a century, and we are also swimming in surpluses from oil and gas, and returns from our sovereign wealth fund. We shouldn't have to constantly beg for what we need to survive, what our businesses need, or what our families need. I know we can "invest" today in ourselves, our schools, our roads, our criminal justice system, and our addiction challenges instead of "saving" everything for tomorrow.

We saw that spirit of abundance in some of the bold choices our state made last year, and it gives me hope. New Mexico committed to no-cost universal childcare for families, fully funded a new medical school, and invested hundreds of millions in the future of the State Fair. And we see it in APS Career Academies, with the ambitious goal of giving every high school student access to an internship in the coming years and a clear pathway to a field of study or profession in the key industries shaping our economy. These are big bets on our people, and a belief that instead of managing scarcity, we can build more opportunity. This month we are joining APS and UNM in a revamped Homelessness Coordinating Council to enable real integration for those who need it most. So I know we can let go of the hesitation that holds back big ideas, the fear that oil and gas might someday decline, that our neighborhoods might change, or that new people and new opportunities might come to our state.

Each of us has a personal role to play too. In the public policy debate, when a new idea comes up just start leaning into "yes," start with affirming that we can do great things, that we will figure out a way, instead of instantly poking holes and nit-picking every detail, and killing big ideas for small reasons. For other elected officials, let's join each other in good ideas, regardless of whether they directly help us or not. I want other cities to thrive. I want our legislature, APS, UNM, and governor to be incredible. When our state is deciding what to do, we all need to get off the sidelines and stand up for ABQ instead of just our specific area of town or our project.

We can and should celebrate others, and get over the "crabs in the bucket" psychology that is so ingrained in our view of each other. It's okay if one neighborhood gets a new aquatic center, another gets a stadium, and another becomes home to the services that help thousands of people move out of homelessness. Abundance means understanding that one community's gain is not another community's loss, that investments across our city make all of Albuquerque stronger. And it's okay to celebrate when things get better. We should be appreciative when our police department earns its way out of a DOJ consent decree. We should be proud when Albuquerque creates a groundbreaking alternative 911 public-safety response that communities from Seattle to New York to Chicago — and our own state of New Mexico — look to as a model. Progress deserves to be recognized because believing we can make things better is part of how we keep making them better.

And we must give our leaders space to lead and hold them accountable when they don't. Let's support those who take on ambitious work to lift up our city. After ten years, we shouldn't still have to fight every year to fund the Gateway, a system we need now more than ever, serving people from all over

our state and one of the most consequential investments we can make in our society. We shouldn't still be debating whether to move forward with the Rail Trail, a transformative investment in families, inclusive growth, and the heart of our city. And we shouldn't keep going back and forth over where to put a stadium. At some point we have to stop relitigating every big idea and start building. We should be willing to question the structures that hold us back too, including having an honest conversation about whether Albuquerque and Bernalillo County would ultimately be better served by a unified city-county government.

But most importantly, this is our moment to break free from the myth of scarcity. With a new governor and new leadership at UNM, we have a once-in-a-decade opportunity to turn Albuquerque's resilience into prosperity — to think bigger, demand more for our city, and stand up for Albuquerque and the future we know is possible.

My Commitment to Defend Albuquerque

It's also never lost on me that our situation in Albuquerque is influenced in part by forces we can't control. I can point to two moments right off the bat that changed our city for a generation. One was the dismantling of our behavioral health system a decade ago. That is when Coronado Park and encampments first appeared. Another is the staggering revelation that our own federal government allowed more than a million fentanyl pills to reach our streets as part of an experimental investigative operation. Using our city like a petri dish to test what would happen — and whether the harm inflicted on our community was worth the possibility of reaching higher-level cartel leaders. It didn't, and it likely cost hundreds of lives, maybe more. This was a massive slap in the face to everyone working in recovery and rebuilding our behavioral health system, to local law enforcement, and a gut punch to the families of victims. Be assured: We are in the process of quantifying the cost to our community for what the feds did, and while it does no justice for the loss of life, we will make them pay for what they did to Albuquerque, and hold those responsible for the trauma, pain, and suffering they caused.

The same goes for when our own government tries to round up and arrest folks because of the color of their skin or the language they speak. Whether it's through a lawsuit, executive order, or legislation, we've shown for two terms, through action, we will not be bullied by this presidential administration, we will not back down to the threats, and we will protect everyone who calls this city home from blatant violations of their civil rights and their constitutional freedoms regardless of where they came from or how they arrived here. That is who we are. We are One Albuquerque. And I will stand up for and defend this city and every person who calls it home!

So, my commitment to you is to resist the underlying current dragging down American democracy, from the tyranny of our federal administration to the broader failure of institutions failing to actually help with the everyday problems we all face. We have the chance to repair this in our city and set the standard for rest of the country.

Summation: Our Unifying Path Forward

We are the city at the crossroads, the center of our state, the center of commerce, and center of our future. I need your help, we need each other's help, to speak this truth, to transcend all that has held us back, to keep our cherished authentic cultural core, AND to grow into the city of shared prosperity we are capable of.

Today we stand in that bright full New Mexico sunlight — it can be a little blinding; its truth can burn a little, but the vision is clear, powerful, and builds a unifying understanding. The theory is simple: We have to know and understand and respect how we got here, cherish what makes us unique and authentic, and also see how we reinforce an outdated scarcity mindset that both helped us become so resilient and special, but now holds us back. Then we have to operate from a place of abundance as we move into the future. We now know what to do as a City, and we know what we must do to realize our best future.

This is New Mexico NOW! This is our path forward!