

Mayor's Budget Address

Transcribed as delivered – July 15, 2019

Good morning. Thank you to President Scott Wilson, Vice President Tommy Hazouri and all City Council Members—both new and returning—for inviting me to present my budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Thank you to all elected officials and City employees for your dedicated service to the citizens of our great city. And to the people of Jacksonville: I am honored to be afforded this opportunity to continue to serve you these next four years. Thank you.

As I said a few weeks ago, I will continue to lead this city with the same sense of urgency and purpose, the same steadfast commitment to responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources, and the same level of optimism and trust in the people of this amazing city—Jacksonville, Florida.

Today marks the fifth time I have stood before this body to present my proposed budget and priorities for the coming year. This budget, like the ones I've brought forward in the past, reflects the core principles and key priorities that have guided me as mayor these last four years. This is a balanced budget that makes strategic investments in the future of our city, without raising taxes. It continues our promise, my promise, to reduce City debt, contributing to the \$376 million we've paid down since July of 2015. It also maintains the reserves and contingencies that demonstrate we can sustain any unforeseen challenges.

Our General Fund budget for this fiscal year will be \$1.374 billion dollars. Through the local economic growth and development, our tax revenues are up compared to last year. This has allowed for increases in resources allocated to many areas. For example, in this proposed budget, public safety is receiving more than \$70 million dollars in additional funding to continue to address the needs of this community. This budget, and the investments within it are made possible because of the steps we took years ago to address our long-standing pension crisis. Because of the actions we took in collaboration

with this Council, with the Governor, the State Legislature, labor representatives and voters, we released the constraints that were being caused by our unfunded pension liabilities. This year, our pension reform efforts have bolstered City reserves with an additional \$64 million dollars in city reserves.

Before my first term of office, I campaigned on a promise to make public safety the top priority of my administration. We have made marked improvements since then. Together as a community we continue to take steps that combat violent crime with major investments in personnel, resources and technology. We have invested in the manpower and resources law enforcement needs to protect and serve. In partnership with Sheriff Mike Williams and State Attorney Melissa Nelson we have implemented ShotSpotter, NIBIN, Real-Time Crime Center, Crime Gun Intelligence Center and the Cure Violence program. But we have much more to do because one violent crime is one too many. That's why the Sheriff, State Attorney and I will not waver in our commitment to the safety of all of the citizens of Jacksonville. This budget supports our law enforcement officers with continued integration and investment in our Real Time Crime Center, adding dedicated personnel to further incorporate the ShotSpotter gun-fire detection capabilities and the NIBIN database to go after the gangs and criminals who bring gun violence to our streets. In addition, we will continue to invest in Cure Violence and their community-based strategies that disrupt and prevent violence.

This budget also supports increased safety at our public schools with Jacksonville Sheriff's Office School Guardian Program. Last year that was a cost \$3.3 million dollars, this year I've allocated \$3.8 million this budget to put officers in schools throughout this county. We must and will make our schools safe havens for every child in Jacksonville to learn and grow. Our commitment to public safety goes beyond law enforcement and includes the health and safety of our citizens. Last year, we included funding for a backup 911 Center for JSO and JFRD that is scheduled to open later this year. We also included funds for new fire stations and rescue units to better serve our citizens. This year, we are increasing those investments. I remember being at a Rotary meeting years ago long before I even considered running for office where a firefighter was giving a speech and

he talked about the challenges first responders were facing with outdated and poorly maintained equipment. In the years since, we've restored the health of our city's vehicle fleet. We've replaced aging vehicles with newer, more efficient models which will significantly lower recurring costs in the years ahead.

Last year, our support of a pilot program addressing the Opioid epidemic led to a 20% decline in EMS transports for overdoses. This program has saved numerous lives and has saved approximately \$3 million in transport and medication costs for JFRD. So we will continue that effort in this budget. This budget includes five million dollars for the construction of a brand-new Fire Station, number 65, in the Arlington Expressway/Atlantic Blvd. area; \$5.85 million dollars for Fire Station renovations, upgrades and land purchases; three new rescue units for Talleyrand, St. Nicholas and Mayport; and funds for the expansion and renovation for Fire Station 10 on McDuff Avenue. This continues the commitment I made last year to ensure stations are added across our growing city, and that rescue units are in every single fire station. These investments reduce call response times and they save lives.

Every day, the men and women of JSO and JFRD put their lives on the line to protect and serve the people of Jacksonville. I thank the first responders on behalf of me and this administration of the city of Jacksonville for all of your service. (applause)

Another key priority for my administration is economic development. By increasing economic and job opportunities, our residents are empowered, and our entire community is strengthened. As mayor, I am committed to working with our partners to deliver a clear message that Jacksonville is open for business. Judging from the major investments by companies such as Amazon, UPS, Wayfair and others in recent years, that message is being heard loud and clear. To date, the economic development projects approved under my administration are projected to create 7,200 jobs—over 2,300 of those, 32% of those are in Council Districts 7, 8, 9 & 10—and bring in new property tax revenues of \$6.5 million dollars annually. We are also investing in key city assets that help generate significant economic impacts for our region. That includes \$1.5 million for dock redevelopment in

Mayport, \$5 million for capital improvements at the Jacksonville Zoo, \$1 million in matching funds as part of a five-year agreement for improvements at the Florida Theatre, and \$1 million for improvements at the historic Ritz Theatre and Prime Osborn Convention Center.

One area of town we are particularly focusing on is Downtown. You can't be a suburb of nowhere. A few months ago, I made a promise to the people of this city that they won't recognize downtown Jacksonville in four years and I stand by that statement. We are right on track... Our downtown residential market continues to see robust growth. From workforce housing to luxury condos, new construction is underway throughout the urban core in Brooklyn, LaVilla and Laura Street. Businesses continue to expand downtown... VyStar Credit Union is adding its name to our downtown skyline and relocating approximately 1,000 jobs. Baptist Medical Center is growing their Southbank Campus with a new critical care tower. And JTA's new headquarters in LaVilla is spurring spirited interest and growth in the historic neighborhood. Here's another demonstration of downtown's promise: for the first time, both the Northbank and Southbank CRAs are experiencing positive cashflow. This means they are better able to fund new efforts and projects that will develop and reshape our urban core into the vibrant heart of this region. But we're not just focused on Downtown. Because of the pension reform solution and sound fiscal practices our City can invest in neighborhood infrastructure that has suffered from long neglect in years past. We are now able to do things that government is supposed to be doing. The year before I got into office there were few dollars invested in our Capital Improvement Program. My first year in office we allocated \$72.6 million dollars to address the infrastructure needs of this community, and last year's budget doubled that. This year's marks another major step toward improving Jacksonville through the inclusion of \$173.5 million of capital investment in the CIP. (applause)

Some highlights: This includes \$2.5 million dollars for drainage and safety improvements in Brooklyn; \$200,000 dollars for Library capital maintenance improvements; \$1.5 million dollars for railroad crossing upgrades; \$3.8 million for ongoing work at City-maintained cemeteries; and \$11 million dollars for maintenance, improvements and new sidewalks

throughout our city. We're investing \$3 million for upgrades, maintenance and repairs at our parks, \$1 million dollars more than last year. Plus, \$500,000 dollars for countywide pool maintenance and upgrades. This year we're also continuing our investment in UF Health, a critical provider in our public health system. This year's CIP includes \$20 million for continued capital improvements at the medical center. In addition to the millions in CIP related to ADA projects, the operational budget for disabled services is \$650,000 dollars and we spent about another \$250,000 dollars from a trust fund for disabled services activities. In fiscal year 20 for ADA compliance we are spending \$4 million dollars on curbs, ramps and sidewalks along with \$2 million dollars on accessibility within public buildings. We are ahead of our targets that were set in by the DOJ settlement. Work like this may not get headlines and attention, but it's important to the people in our communities—especially in those neighborhoods that have long been neglected. These investments help create an environment that fosters and supports the continued growth and success of all of our citizens.

Another focus of this budget and my administration is on the children of our city. Jacksonville's kids need to know that the people of this community are committed to them individually and committed to their success. I am committed. I am all in. I've held too many grieving mothers and I've spoken to too many young people that are facing real challenges every day for us not to take this seriously. We must demonstrate to our "At-Hope" youth that there is another way forward, toward prosperity and a place away from danger. We must do more to ensure that every child in Jacksonville has access to quality education and the resources that they need to succeed.

This was the motivation behind the creation of the Kids Hope Alliance that is focused on a clear mission of protecting the children of this city. This budget continues to build on KHA's work, with a nearly \$2.7 million dollar increase to support their programs and initiatives to support the youth of our city. This includes early learning and an expansion of jobs for teens, not simply in the summer but now we are going to have jobs programs year round. Our state attorney concluded that KHA is best suited to manage the juvenile justice diversion program, so this increase also funds that effort. KHA and the city will

work together to keep young, non-violent offenders out of jail and on the path to support and skills they need to turn their lives around. I look forward to working with the KHA board, our schools, community leaders and stakeholders in the coming year to ensure every single child in Jacksonville has what they need to prosper. I encourage the entire community, including businesses and nonprofits, to get involved and join me in these efforts. We can all make a difference. We all have a stake in this and we need to send a clear message to the young people of Jacksonville and that is that their community is 100% behind them.

Two weeks ago, as I took the oath of office for the second time, I talked about my optimism and faith in the people of this city. Those of us on this dais today are fortunate to have this opportunity to serve the bold, resilient and compassionate people of this city. We have been entrusted with a great responsibility. At their most basic level, budgets are about priorities. And this budget demonstrates my commitment to the continued growth and development of our city. This is a smart and effective budget that respects the hard work of taxpayers, focuses on key priorities, and aligns with our shared vision of *One City. One Jacksonville.*

My team and I look forward to earning your support as you consider this budget in the weeks ahead. Working together, this year and in the years ahead, we will make tremendous progress toward a stronger and more vibrant community. Jacksonville truly is a city on the rise, and if we keep doing the work, the best is yet to come. Thank you members of council for hosting me this morning. Today and through the budget process, my staff will remain available to answer your questions and complete this important work. God bless you and thank you.