

MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY SPEECH 2021

Date: October 19, 2021

Time: 6:30pm

Good evening and welcome to the State of Union City!

Thank you for joining us virtually tonight as we continue to chart our path forward safely through the pandemic.

Let me begin by acknowledging all of the continued efforts and perseverance by City staff and community partners to provide support to the community and our businesses during this current phase of the pandemic.

Partnerships with organizations, like the Alameda County Public Health Department, Bay Area Community Health and Predicine Lab, have provided testing and pop-up vaccination sites at locations across Union City.

Over 11,000 lunches, bags & boxes of groceries were handed out to seniors throughout the pandemic through partnerships with Daily Bowl, Spectrum, Tri-City Food Bank, Centro De Servicios, and the USDA Farm to Families Food Box Program – in conjunction with Daylight Foods and Bay Cities Produce.

The City has continued to find ways to support renters, nonprofits and businesses who are fighting their way through the pandemic.

Since these programs have been in place, approximately \$245,000 in financial relief has been distributed to 54 renter households, containing 200 household members. Funding from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding through the CDBG-CV (Corona Virus) program was utilized to help provide assistance for residents who have struggled to pay rent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

\$294,000 in grants have been awarded/committed to 32 small businesses through the City's Road to Recovery Small Business Assistance Program, which is Federal pass-through money also provided by the CDBG program via the CARES Act in order to assist businesses that were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In total, the City has been able to allocate approximately \$980,000 in Federal Funding from both the CDBG and CARES Act programs to help residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

And, we want to thank East Bay Community Energy for awarding \$50,000 to Union City nonprofits who are serving vulnerable residents through food programs. The City was able to award 8 organizations with Food Security Grant funding to continue to be able to provide food to vulnerable residents.

{Transition}

I want to recognize YOU, my fellow Union City residents for taking the pandemic seriously, continuing to follow health guidelines, and getting vaccinated.

Today I am proud to report that 80% of Union City residents are fully vaccinated, which closely parallels with 79% of total Alameda County residents that are vaccinated.

Join me in encouraging those who aren't vaccinated to do so. The vaccine is widely available and there is plenty of factual information that can help people arrive at the conclusion that the vaccines are safe for people to take.

Tell your unvaccinated friends and family to check out the City of Union City's YouTube channel where they can hear local Union City residents from all backgrounds talk about why they chose to take the vaccine.

We also want to take a moment to honor the 59 Union City residents whose lives were taken in the last 18 months from the coronavirus.

As the Delta variant has ravaged the United States over the last few months and other variants emerge, many of us certainly were hoping for a different outcome by now. But, there is no doubt we will all look back on this moment years from now understanding that we did what we needed to do in order to outlast the coronavirus.

What we will certainly take away from the pandemic is that emergency preparedness is critical to our readiness in managing the next crisis.

I want to acknowledge the frustration that some residents have felt by their perceived lack of response from the City. However, the City has been very focused on providing services during this

trying time. We appreciate your patience, as Covid-19 has had a direct impact on staffing levels and response times.

{Transition} Strategic Plan

Despite the pandemic, the City has continued to make significant progress in the last year towards implementing our five-year strategic plan. As we approach the mid-point of the plan's life cycle, we have already experienced the benefits of our discipline and accountability to the strategic plan.

Since its adoption in 2019, the strategic plan has helped the City to stabilize its finances and maintain its operation by providing the community with public safety and clean streets, maintaining parks and community services and recreation for people of all ages and life stages to enjoy.

The strategic plan has also helped the City focus on organizational improvements that aim to help the City operate more efficiently and effectively, so that we can optimize and focus city resources.

To improve customer service, our Public Works department now has a service request and reporting form online. Residents can easily access online services in real time to report issues like graffiti, street potholes, street light outages, and illegal dumping on City streets.

The strategic plan has helped to create a culture of fiscal prudence and discipline within the City organization and on the City Council by giving us a tool to properly vet programs, policies and new ideas, as well as, a system where we now prioritize them based on available resources and data.

Despite navigating a national emergency, City staff have carried out herculean efforts to accomplish many of the plan's strategies.

These accomplishments include:

- The passage of the Utility Users Tax (Measure WW) last November, which will protect essential city services, like, senior citizen support and meal programs during the COVID-19 crisis and recovery, 911 emergency and paramedic response, street and pothole repair, fire protection, disaster and health crisis preparedness, youth violence prevention and drug intervention programs, and other city services. The revenue generated by this measure replaces revenue from our retirement of the Public Safety Parcel Tax.

- Another notable accomplishment is Union Landing was rezoned last year to support the opening of our first cannabis retail location, Flor. It is our understanding this is the first cannabis store located in a retail shopping center in the country and it is attracting widespread positive attention from the retail sector.
- Our Police Department and City made extensive strides in engaging the community to listen and learn on ways to reimagine policing in Union City. Our engagement efforts helped the police department identify four key areas of focus: Transparency and Accountability, Hiring and Training, Mental Health and Social Services, and Community Policing. Our police department adopted these four priorities in their new Strategic Plan that will be presented to the City Council later this year.
- Further, the City Council assigned the Human Relations Commission to study diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This endeavor will study disparities among people from different backgrounds and will help the City Council understand what we can be doing to instill practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our service model.
- Another accomplishment is the renewal of the Business Improvement District for Union Landing, which ensures businesses in Union Landing can thrive and receive basic support, like landscape maintenance, garbage & recycling and public safety, along with support for marketing to increase visitors to the shopping center. Beyond these accomplishments, the City remains steadfast in our efforts to build fiscal stability.

Many who followed along with us over the last few years know about our determination to address a long-term structural deficit to the General Fund.

The City's fiscal condition worsened due to the impact of the economic decline brought on by the shelter-in-place order and health guidelines due to Corona virus.

In total, we expect to lose over \$13 million in General Fund revenue by the time the economy is expected to recover from the pandemic.

However, through disciplined fiscal planning and a lot of belt-tightening, plus voter support of the half a cent sales and utility users tax measures, and federal stimulus funds from the American Rescue Plan Act, Union City has established fiscal stability for the next three years.

While we are incredibly relieved to know that our fiscal situation is intact for the next few years, we are not resting on our laurels.

The General Fund receives over 15% of its revenue from the two voter-approved measures that I just mentioned.

The half-cent sales tax was first approved by voters in 2010 and renewed by voters in 2014. This measure is set to expire in 2025, just over three years from now.

The utility users' tax was approved by voters in November 2020, and expires in December 2028.

Both measures are expected to raise a combined \$11 million per year in General Fund revenue, which goes towards essential city services, such as public safety, street and park maintenance, disaster preparedness and youth violence prevention.

We will continue the conversation with the community on the importance of the need to keep these measures in place beyond their expiration dates to continue to provide essential city services.

{Transition} Now I will tell you about other important Council topics.

The City is committed to sustainable practices and renewable energy, as a result, we have incorporated them into our strategic plan. One way we do this is through our affiliation with East Bay Community Energy, the public power agency that has served Alameda County since 2018. East Bay Community Energy provides greener energy at lower rates for our residents. They are doing great work on our behalf. For more information about their programs and resources, I encourage you to check out their website and sign up for their newsletter at EBCE.org.

Another step the Council has taken to address sustainable practices is to adopt a new ordinance to increase the collection of organic waste and recoverable food. This ordinance is required as a result of the State's new legislation, AB 1383, to reduce greenhouse gases. By diverting organics from the waste stream, the City will help meet the State's climate action goals. More information will be shared as the new ordinance is rolled out over the next several months.

The City is also reviewing its ordinance on Fireworks. Just this past 4th of July, there were 169 calls for police service, 10 total fires – including a fire that damaged 2 homes and 5 vegetation fires - as well as a medical call that was directly attributed to fireworks. In response to ongoing public safety issues, the Council agreed to take action to reduce the illegal use of fireworks. We

are considering increasing the fines from \$100 to \$1,000 for the illegal use of fireworks, establishing a Social Host ordinance, which means that property owners will be liable for the illegal use of fireworks on their property, and reducing the hours of use for Safe and Sane fireworks. The Council also engaged the community to understand how they felt about fireworks. We recognize many of our local nonprofits benefit from the sale of Safe and Sane fireworks, but frequently safe and sane fireworks are used to mask the use of illegal fireworks. The impact of illegal fireworks creates unsafe situations.

{Transition} Projects

We have many projects underway in Union City:

- Many of you have noticed major construction projects in our roadways during the past year. Alameda County Water District (ACWD) recently completed the first phase of a major water line replacement project on Alvarado-Niles Road. Also, PG&E is continuing to improve a major gas line on Decoto Road. Both of these projects have been inconvenient at times, but we welcome the reinvestment in our community by our utility providers.
- Coming up over the next few years, you will see ongoing roadway work throughout the City. These projects include ongoing repavement projects, including Dyer Street and Decoto Road. You will also see the addition of bike lanes on Union City Boulevard. With a soon to be updated Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, over time, you will see bike lanes added to many street-improvement projects.
- The Quarry Lakes Parkway and Trail project is the new backbone infrastructure that will serve development around our BART station. In the next 10 years, the city could see an additional 2,000 units of housing built around BART. Quarry Lakes Parkway will help provide the access and utilities to support all of the new growth.
A critical element of this circulation corridor is the construction of bike lanes and a multi-use path that will link Mission Boulevard and the hillsides to regional parks and regional bike paths and trails, including Quarry Lakes and Alameda Creek.
- The Council recently accepted a \$4.2 million grant from the Alameda County Transportation Commission which will be used for the final design of Phases 1 and 2 of the

Quarry Lakes Parkway (QLP) project. Phase 1 will construct a portion of QLP from 7th Street to Mission Blvd. Phase 2 will construct a portion of QLP from Old Alameda Creek to Alvarado-Niles Road and will realign the existing Quarry Lakes Drive adjacent to Old Alameda Creek.

- Construction on the east side of our BART Station was recently completed with a widened platform with new stairs and new escalators. The new east entrance to our BART Station is complete. Preparation of the bid package to construct the new pedestrian crossing across the Union Pacific railroad tracks is underway. The pedestrian crossing is a joint effort by Union Pacific Railroad and Union City. We expect a ribbon cutting for the new crossing in 2022.

{Transition} Housing

As a reminder, the state requires the City to have a housing plan. The housing crisis is so critical, the state is imposing stricter penalties than in the past if cities do not meet their goals.

- As part of the Station District build out, one of those areas of growth is called the Gateway Site or the Caltrans site located near Arroyo Park and Alvarado Niles Road. We have assumed responsibility for the property from Caltrans and have marketed it for residential development. Adding a new residential neighborhood on this property has been a goal of the City's since 1985. This will bring more than 300 new units of needed housing to our community, and a minimum of 25% of the housing will be affordable. Preliminary discussions are underway with a developer that the City has worked with in the past. We expect housing construction to begin in about two years, after entitlements are approved and the environmental impact process is complete.

We also recently approved entitlements for over 900 units of housing in an area called Station East. This is about 26 acres including the former Air Liquide site, located at 7th Street and Decoto Road. The development will include apartments, with a grocery store on the ground floor and retail services along Decoto Road; ownership condominiums, and 146 units of affordable housing.

- As to the 81 units of affordable housing to be built between D & E Streets on Mission Boulevard, that we call Lazuli Landing, the developer hopes to move forward as soon as the funding is secured.

{Transition} Homelessness – In addition to creation of affordable housing, the City is now able to provide more services for the unhoused with grant funds.

We have been operating our CAREEvan safe parking program since 2016, which serves individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness. Other cities have replicated our program. Due to staffing limitations, program participants have not been receiving case management services. We have recently applied for and secured over \$1.5 million in grant funding from the State to address homelessness over the next five years. These grant funds will be used to hire a full-time homelessness case manager and a part-time outreach worker. They will ensure CAREEvan participants and other unhoused individuals within Union City receive case management services to transition them into housing. Our staff will also be making contact with unhoused residents to connect them to mental health and social services.

{Transition} Census, redistricting and election.

As you all know, 2020 was the year of the federal Census. Now, with new population numbers, Union City will be updating its voting district boundaries in the coming months. In November the Council will have an overview of the redistricting process and final boundary adjustments are expected in early 2022. Any changes to the district boundaries will be applied to the November 2022 election.

And speaking of the 2022 election, three seats are up for election on the City Council. As a result of term limits two councilmembers are termed out, so we will see a change of the makeup of the City Council. I urge all Union City residents to stay engaged. Your voice and vote are important to the future of the community.

{Transition} Strategic Plan

I am going to circle back to the strategic plan to remind residents that we on the City Council voted unanimously on 5 priorities for the coming year and staff is working on all of them:

The 5 City Council Priorities are:

- To generate more tax revenue needed for long-term fiscal sustainability.
- To recruit, retain and plan for future staffing needs.
- To improve and streamline the development process.
- To address homelessness.
- To build staffing and technology infrastructure to develop the Station District, construct Quarry Lakes Parkway and prepare for future housing development.

Remember, we are in this together! I thank you all for listening this evening, now it is time for questions.

*If you missed the live Q&A please visit our website and click on the *Share Your Feedback* link -

<https://www.unioncity.org/FormCenter/Community-Feedback-8/Share-Your-Thoughts-With-Us-46>