



BALTIMORE

EXPERIENCE *THE* RENAISSANCE

INAUGURATION OF
Mayor Brandon M. Scott
CITY OF BALTIMORE

TUESDAY
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Good Afternoon Baltimore!

Madame Mayor, thank you for that kind introduction.

But even more so thank you for seeing the potential in a young 23 year old from Park Heights not only giving me my first opportunity to serve Baltimore, but investing deeply into me personally.

I would not be here today if not for you and, although you know it and hate mushy stuff, I have to say it publicly thank you and I love you.

Thank you all for being here today as we write an important new chapter in Baltimore's history.

Let me begin by welcoming all of those who have honored me by being here today:

- The elected officials
 - Governor Wes Moore
 - Congressman Kweisi Mfume
 - Council President Nick Mosby
 - Council President-Elect Zeke Cohen
 - And all of my colleagues on City Council
 - Of course, Comptroller Henry – who I just had the honor of swearing-in
 - State's Attorney Ivan Bates
 - Our state delegation and members of the General Assembly.
 - My fellow Mayors from around the state and around the country ...
 - Including Mayor Tishaura Jones from our Sister City St. Louis
- And of course my family ...
 - My parents ...
 - My brothers ...
 - All of my Aunts, Uncles, & Cousins ...
 - And of course my incredible wife, Hana, and our boys Ceron and Charm.
 - And each and every Baltimorean young, old, and in-between that has joined me today.

I would not be here today without them, who built me up over a lifetime to be ready for this moment, and who have sustained me through it all.

As I stand on this stage today, the unique nature of this occasion is not lost on me.



I am very aware that it is the first time in twenty years that Baltimore has given its Mayor a second term.

I am acutely aware that my first inauguration four years ago was not the typical celebration, as we were restricted during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

And, most of all, I am especially aware of how rare it still is – in this City and across this country – for young black men who grew up in the type of neighborhood where I grew up to be entrusted with leadership in executive positions.

It is safe to say those three things are connected to one another. And It is safe to say that it took someone like me, confronted with a challenge like COVID-19, to change the trajectory of instability Baltimore was on.

As many of you know – my public service began because of the neighborhood where I grew up – and the traumatic things that often happened there.

I witnessed my first shooting before my ninth birthday on the church lot near our house That was also our basketball court.

Though it was only 20 seconds away from home, it was impossible to get there – all I could do was jump into the bushes and hope a bullet didn't jump in there with me.

After it happened, it was that feeling of fear and frustration that took over.

And somehow, still, I was expected to go to school the next day, as if everything was normal. But it wasn't.

I kept asking my mom, my dad aunts, uncles, grandparents, everyone:

'Why did this happen? Why does no one care?' – nagging them to no end, the way only a little kid can.

And my Mom responded – probably just hoping I'd shut-up – and told me "If you want something to change – you'll have to do it yourself. No one is coming to save us. No one is coming to save Park Heights."

As a parent now, I know she was just looking for a little peace.

But as that young, Black boy from Park Heights I was looking for a little peace too.

And she planted the seed in me that I needed to dedicate myself to making change in order to get change.

I carried that with me through everything – through tough track practices at MERVOL and to difficult classes at the St. Mary's College of Maryland.

I carried it with me as I got sat down on the curb in handcuffs, simply because a cop saw me - a young Black man with braids in a basketball jersey – and decided that was enough to match the description.

It didn't matter that it was the jersey of a completely different team or that I was in St. Mary's County when the robbery happened.

I carried that seed my mother planted with me when I first walked into City Hall at 23 years old, grateful that future Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake took a chance on me and saw fit to give me the opportunity.



And I carried it with me when I achieved my own first electoral victory and was graced with the privilege of representing my neighbors in the Second District.

All the while, that seed began to grow and take form – just as I grew and learned.

I got to know my neighbors and started doing the good work of serving this City alongside community leaders, like Gloria Jenkins and Mark Washington, and City Hall colleagues, many of whom are here today.

And I was still carrying it with me as I took the oath of office four years ago to assume the role of Mayor, standing only with my parents thanks to the still-raging pandemic.

At that time, as all of you will remember – our city was facing daunting challenges

Let's not forget the realities that this Administration took on at the end of 2020.

On top of COVID – Baltimore's City Hall had not had consistent leadership.

Unlike other cities, our city had zig-zagged between administrations and the struggles our city has faced for decades bubbled to the surface in ways it hadn't before as a result.

While gun violence reached historic levels – City Hall was in desperate need of change, stability, and vision.

And I knew as I took my oath of office four years ago – it was my charge to deliver that.

It was a fitting challenge for that seed my mom planted in me as a young boy looking for answers after witnessing violence.

And a fitting challenge for someone who grew up when, where and how I grew up.

Because one thing about being raised here is that we are built different and can thrive under any amount of pressure.

So – we got to work.

When I first took office – I outlined the five pillars of my administration:

- Building Public Safety
- Prioritizing Youth
- Clean and Healthy Communities
- Equitable Neighborhood Development
- & Responsible Stewardship of City Resources

They remain our guiding light and will continue to structure our priorities moving forward.

But we will renew our efforts in each of them and tackle new challenges wherever they arise.

I said throughout my tenure and throughout my re-election campaign that I want to be remembered as the Mayor that served at the turning point for Baltimore.



I want to be remembered as the foundational block for a Better City.

The challenges we face do not lend themselves to overnight successes.

For decades there have been promises made to Baltimoreans about quick fixes and short term solutions – but they have always been hollow.

Many of us long-time Baltimoreans know that all too well.

I know those I grew up with in Park Heights and countless neighborhoods like it heard those promises and witnessed them fail, first-hand.

I don't ever want to be someone who made promises like that.

Rather, I want to be someone who charts a course that addresses the root causes of our most complex problems the right way – not the easy way, not the popular way – but the right way.

Because wrong is wrong no matter how many clicks, likes, or awards it receives.

And right is right no matter how many people don't like it.

Doing things the right way is the only way to bring sustained and meaningful change to Baltimoreans.

And we've had a lot of success already.

On public safety – we've fundamentally changed the way we think, do, and lead.

We laid out Baltimore's first-ever Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan, reshaping the way our city approached public safety and setting tangible goals to drive down violence.

We established the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement and made a commitment to the hundreds of dedicated Baltimoreans devoting their lives to healing our city in the streets with community violence intervention – whether professionally or in their spare time – that City government would be there in a way it never had before.

We also improved the way that our law enforcement officers work alongside community partners, strengthened our coordination with federal agencies and the State's Attorney Office, and have gone after gun manufacturers and distributors in court – like the ghost gun company Polymer80 and Hanover Armory – to directly address the source of guns on our streets.

Since I took office – we have taken more than 10,200 guns off the streets of Baltimore.

That is what it means to have a truly comprehensive approach. Now, we see the results of that partnership and commitment.

This year, we're seeing a 24% percent reduction in homicides and a 34% percent reduction in nonfatal shootings.

That, of course, is on top of a historic 20 percent reduction in 2023 – which at the time, the largest single year drop that Baltimore had ever seen.



When I introduced my approach to tackling violence in a sustainable way and began working to establish the Group Violence Reduction Strategy – we set a public goal of reducing homicides by 15 percent year-over-year.

The response was predictable: skepticism and disbelief.

I knew the challenge – and I knew the risk in communicating such a public goal.

But I also knew the importance of letting you, the residents, know where I stood.

We missed that benchmark my first year in office, and in my second.

But in the Fall of 2022 the numbers started to drop – and while the year-to-year numbers are encouraging – from this day in 2022 to now, the fact that we have seen a 40 percent reduction in homicides is remarkable.

But they're more than just numbers. Those are hundreds of lives saved or prevented from being altered forever as the result of a non-fatal shooting.

We know that violence is devastating to those it impacts – like 13-year-old Mason, who witnessed his father being gunned down in McCulloh Homes right outside their home.

MONSE victim services was able to reach Mason and his mom and help them get connected to a variety of services.

But no one should be forced to go through what they went through.

We will do everything we can to take care of the ones who do but, always will keep working to reduce the number of families who experience it.

We're taking the same comprehensive approach to all of our work.

We have invested more in our young people than ever before – opening rec centers and expanding programs like YouthWorks, B'More This Summer, and our Attendance Challenge.

Rather than balancing our budgets on the backs of our kids like this City has done in the past, we're building up through hope and opportunity and a chance at experience.

Opportunities like the ones provided to Demalik – who instead of being banned after punching a wall at Virginia S Baker Rec – our Rec and Parks staff wrapped their arms around him, connected him with the Upton Boxing Gym, and after helping him improve his swimming skills, hired him as a lifeguard at Riverside and Cahill where he's worked for the last few years.

He's now on a path to becoming a professional boxer. You can see how this story could've gone another way.

Or, take for example, Shy'kim who as a young father still in high school would often squeegee on corners like Russell & Hamburg and Washington & MLK to make a little extra money.

Through the Squeegee Collaborative, we were able to get him connected to employment opportunities, open a savings account, acquire State ID, and get connected to the Young Fatherhood Program at the Center for Urban Families.



Today, as the dad of a kindergartener, he's now finished his education, working full time at a security firm, and helping other young men as part of the Squeegee Collaborative Leadership Team

These stories are why it's important that we've made more investment in programs that actually support our young people.

Whether it's programs like the squeegee collaborative or by opening 11 new or renovated rec centers, 7 pools, 30 playgrounds, and 12 new 21st century schools – these investments make a difference in our kid's lives that could change the trajectory of their future and Baltimore's future, forever.

These aren't short-term solutions, they're long term ones for them and for all of Baltimore.

The same goes for our vacants strategy.

For years, Baltimore searched for a solution that could solve the crisis of vacants overnight.

But deep down we always knew that tackling the blight that suffocated our city for decades would take a lot longer than that to unravel.

This problem wasn't created by one Mayor, and it was never going to be solved during one mayor's time in office.

We knew it would take partnership and planning, long-term perspective and dedication to see it through.

Baltimore has always had the ability, but we needed the vision ... and the capital ... to make it happen.

That's why the plan we outlined spans 15-years.

It centers partnership with faith and business leaders at BUILD and GBC and our counterparts in Governor Moore's administration and state government.

Our vision seeks to invest an unprecedented \$3 billion into our neighborhoods

... tackling whole blocks ...

And ensuring that those long-term residents who witnessed the painful decline of their neighborhoods are the very ones who also get to see the benefit of this new investment.

We know that this is one of Baltimore's most difficult problems – which is why our vision is built to withstand the future, long past my time serving as Mayor.

It is that longevity that I think is crucial ...

Because my passion for Baltimore extends far beyond the life of any one political fight or my own political career.

I hope it has been clear to Baltimoreans of all stripes – no matter what part of the city you come from or your political perspective – that my administration is fighting to actually solve these problems, no matter how hard the climb or how long it takes.

In Baltimore City, by re-electing me and making their voices heard on ballot initiatives, I think residents voted to say that's what they wanted too.



In many ways, I think today we mark the closure of that chapter of uncertainty that has plagued our city – and close it for good.

My reelection was never guaranteed – and I could have just as easily only had one term and been part of the broader story of Baltimore’s instability.

But, instead, Baltimoreans said “No, we’re in this fight for the long-haul.”

And, now, together, we are opening a new chapter in Baltimore’s history – one focused on growth in our progress.

We have laid the groundwork on so many of our priorities – in public safety, in our fight to end vacants, modernizing city government to better serve residents, and in doing all of these things the right way – and a more equitable way – than we’ve tried in the past.

Now, we must pour into that work even more.

We must bring more partners into the fold – even those once skeptical – and redouble our efforts.

I often talk of being in the midst of Baltimore’s renaissance.

And I deeply believe we are poised to move this city in an unprecedented and positive trajectory.

But I know that this work does not happen overnight – and it simply does not live and die with my administration or my time in this office.

That is why I am calling on every Baltimorean, every resident and every visitor alike, to be part of this renaissance we are building.

The way that we truly move away from the instability is to have each and every one of us take up the mantle of this work.

We may be seeing success in many of the metrics we set out to achieve – but let me be clear the work is far from over.

It would be naive of me to think that it will not be harder now than it has been in the last four years.

While Baltimoreans may not have swung towards the right the way so many places in our country did – we are certain to see some of the impacts of the next Presidential Administration in Washington.

And let’s be honest, the only thing certain when it comes to them is un-certainty.

Regardless of what is happening on the national stage, we will do everything in our power to keep moving our City forward – together.

We will continue to work to build generational wealth for families – particularly Black families – who were impacted by decades of intentional disinvestment.

We will continue to protect women and their reproductive rights.

We will continue to support and honor our immigrant communities.



And we will continue redeveloping our city with intention and equity for all Baltimoreans.

Many of these things may be harder now than we have hoped.

We hope that those assuming power in Washington are able to see our progress in curbing gun violence through a holistic, public-health informed approach alongside our federal partners.

We hope they continue to see the value of federal transportation investment for projects like the Red Line and the Key Bridge and fixing the Highway to Nowhere.

But unfortunately, we simply do not know the attitude they'll take to these things.

But, as always, Baltimore will fight for itself.

We have the best Congressional delegation a Mayor could ask for.

Senator Cardin, who today just a few weeks before he leaves office is down in DC fighting for that Key Bridge funding, Senator Van Hollen, Congressman Mfume, my partner Congressman-Elect Johnny Olsewski, and of course our new, incredible Senator-Elect Angela Alsobrooks, Maryland's first Black US Senator.

We know that they will keep fighting for us in DC.

Together, we will keep moving forward no matter what obstacles are presented over the next four years and we will make preparations to ensure this work proceeds even if the federal support disappears.

Throughout Baltimore's history from the War of 1812 to the fight for Civil Rights – our City has been at the forefront, no matter what major battle is happening in the country.

To Council-President Elect Cohen and to all my partners on the new city council

We have both the responsibility and the opportunity to define what happens with our city during this era.

It will be hard – there will be tough choices to make and bullies that we must stand united against – but I know that we are up to the task.

Tenacity and grit is what defines us as a city – and we need it now more than ever.

We have the opportunity here to show the world what is possible when neighbors come together to redefine their City and shape its future for the better.

That doesn't mean we forget our history or change who we are – but we will continue to learn from the sins of our past and continue to write a new approach for the future of our city.

Our second term will be about driving that work forward. It will be about sending a message to everyone living here – and to those thinking about moving here – that Baltimore truly is the greatest City in the world.

And we will do all of those things the right way.



Because that's what the people deserve.

They deserve an approach filled with love and respect, not contempt or disinterest.

Baltimoreans – the kind who proudly represented their neighborhoods through thick and thin – deserve to be heard above and beyond the county billionaires that think they are entitled to special treatment.

Our mission is to grow this city in as many ways as possible.

Yes, we want to grow our population and reverse the trend that has drained our city for 50 years, in particular by growing middle-class Black families.

Yes, we want to expand economic opportunities in our city.

Yes, we want to redevelop downtown projects like Harborplace and projects around town like Poppleton and Edmondson Village and Park Heights which have needed redevelopment for a long, long time.

But we must do all of these things in a way that centers and honors the Baltimoreans that actually live here.

We can welcome new residents without supplanting the old ones.

We can build public safety without reverting back to mass incarceration.

We can grow our City's economy without deepening the inequality that has long defined Baltimore.

And we can and will improve our city services without needing to take resources away from other investment areas like those that serve our kids.

And in my second term – that will continue to be our focus.

We have to do it this way – the right way – because for someone who truly loves Baltimore, that's the only way.

I love my City with all my heart. I think that part is clear.

It is that love that drives my approach.

But let's not be naive, we also have to do this the right way – because that's the only way the progress is going to last.

We have to build policy on a strong foundation of love and respect for the people that it will impact – and then ensure that it is actually having the effect it is supposed to.

If we don't, then it's hollow!

And there are those, unfortunately, who would love nothing more than to see us fail.

There are those who will do everything in their power to slow the progress we're making, hoping to take us back to the old days where only a select few were taken care of.



But that will not deter us – because we are Baltimoreans and we don't scare easily.

I want Baltimoreans who love this City to be the ones leading the charge to make it better.

We're going to take some big strides over the next four years.

We're going to revolutionize the way cities tackle blight and increase housing stock that families can actually afford to live in with our vacant strategy.

There is no reason that we should be losing Black Baltimoreans because they feel forced into either staying in disinvested-in neighborhoods or moving away to find affordability.

We want to make it easier for those families to be able to buy right here in Baltimore - to stay in the neighborhoods where their families are from if that is where they want to be.

We're going to expand the Group Violence Reduction Strategy to be city-wide and keep working to improve lives through our public safety plan rather than just tossing them in cuffs and throwing away the key.

That means supporting people like Malik, who through the help of YAP was able to start fresh and open his own cleaning business.

He shows that these participants can actually take the chance given to them and change their life for the better instead of ending up dead or in jail.

The reductions we've achieved so far are incredible progress, but for me it will never be enough until there are no homicides and no shootings.

And, so, we will continue to work.

We also want to fundamentally fix the way the City is funded and work to address high tax burdens that face so many residents in our city.

We'll do this by continuing to advocate for part of our sales tax – a move that would bring us in line with almost every single one of our peer cities.

I am deeply appreciative of the partnership we've built with my friend Governor Moore.

And it is a windfall that Baltimore is represented in the General Assembly by so many prominent fighters for our city – including those in key leadership positions like Senate President Bill Ferguson.

All of us have inherited systems and budgetary realities that were not our own doing – and we are now charged with trying to clear a path forward for the future.

I know that those at the state share our desire to make the City's financial future more secure and stable – and we will in good faith work with our partners to find common ground on the solutions.

Here in the City, we need to grapple with the fact that one of the most important things that sets our City apart from those peers is the fact that we're funded differently – and we need to change that.



Nearly every other city in the country receives a portion of their local sales tax – and they started that process decades ago.

We simply cannot solve the problems of Baltimore and the impact of high property taxes if we have fewer tools at our disposal than our peers around the country.

In our plan, just a two percent share of sales tax will allow us to both fund our vacants work and provide every homeowner in the city a \$1000 per year property tax cut.

The work to make this happen – and make it make sense for both the City and our State – will not be easy.

But it's necessary, and it will be one of our top priorities this upcoming legislative session.

We won't stop there.

We will also work to address the devastating impact that public health crises like the opioid epidemic had on our city.

We've now secured more than \$600 million in restitution funds directly from those Big Pharma that fueled the deadly opioid epidemic in Baltimore.

Governed by the parameters set in my Executive Order, we will put that money to use saving lives and changing the popular imagination about what is possible in substance-use care.

All of these things are in service to the people who actually live, work, and enjoy our City to ensure they are at the forefront of everything we do.

That seed my mom planted three and a half decades ago – about service and needing to take on the responsibility to change our city – is still there, growing stronger everyday.

Nurturing it and ensuring it continues to grow, takes many hands.

That is what we're called to do over the next four years. All of us must come together to grow this renaissance, to spur this progress, and see this fight through.

There are many people in this room today who are involved in violence intervention, saving lives in the streets. They all know one thing – there is no end.

This is a daily grind that you need to keep doing day-in and day-out.

Our work to grow our city is the same.

No matter what the world throws at Baltimore, we will continue to do the work and do it the right way, for all of Baltimore's people.

My presence here today proves that we've turned the page on a new chapter of growth and closed the old chapter of instability.

Now, we must keep writing that chapter – and I hope everyone in this room, everyone watching at home, everyone who stumbles upon this speech down the line – will join us in helping to write that Chapter.



For Baltimoreans, with love– that is how we'll write this chapter.

And I could not be more proud or excited to be doing this work alongside each of you.

Baltimore – you have nurtured and inspired me my entire life.

And, so, I have dedicated my life to you.

That is the greatest decision I could have ever made – and I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue doing so.

Now, let's get back to work.

Thank you!