

“From Hoosier Hospitality to Hoosier Chutzpah”

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Delivered By: Indianapolis City-County Council President Vop Osili

[Greetings].

In 1987, the Los Angeles Times ran a piece from famed Associated Press national reporter Sharon Cohen, in which she proposed that Indianapolis consider changing its residents’ namesake characteristic from “***Hoosier Hospitality***” to “***Hoosier Chutzpah***.” “Consider,” she wrote, “this city built a stadium before it had pro football, [and] a world-class swimming complex when the nearest [swim] team was 60 miles away,” before going on to note that, in 1983, Indianapolis had lured the headquarters of the U.S. Rowing Association away from Philadelphia, despite Indy not having a navigable river at the time, and had somehow beaten out West Palm Beach, Florida, to be named host of the 1989 World Water Ski Championships—despite Indiana’s status as a “double-landlocked” state.

“Nervy,” Cohen wrote, “yes.” “Nutty, no.”

Were she still with us, I suspect Sharon Cohen might sum today up the same way.

Today, thanks to Mayor Hogsett’s leadership and the support of my fellow Councillors, many of whom are also here, we’re continuing that tradition of “Hoosier Chutzpah.” It’s a tradition that, over time, has paid off time and time again in the form of Indianapolis hosting not only the 1987 Pan American Games about which Cohen was writing, but:

- the 2012 Super Bowl and more than three dozen NFL Scouting Combines
- eight NCAA Men's Final Fours and three women's Final Fours
- the 2022 College Football Playoffs Championship Game
- dozens of U.S. Olympic Trials in diving, swimming, gymnastics, rowing, and track, and
- 25 annual Fire Department Instructors Conferences, 17 annual FFA conventions, and, later this week, our 20th annual GenCon gathering.

This list could go on and on, and I haven't even mentioned next year's NBA All-Star Game or the event I'm personally most looking forward to, the 2024 "Sweets & Snacks" Expo from the National Confectioner's Association. The point is that while Hoosier hospitality has no doubt played a role in our city's ability to attract repeat business when it comes to sporting events, conventions, and the like, it's Hoosier chutzpah that built our capacity to host events like these in the first place.

Of course, every organization that chooses Indianapolis as a host city is looking to grow its own numbers, which means we need to keep growing our ability to welcome larger and larger events. We can't afford to wait until some of those big names choose somewhere else to meet because we couldn't accommodate them. Well, let me be more specific: Hoosier families can't afford it. Not when the Indiana Destination Development Corporation says that, without tourism, every Indiana household would have to pay \$526 more in state and local taxes to maintain current levels of tax receipts. Not when 65 cents of every dollar spent in 2021 by visitors to the state was retained in Indiana's economy, and when 40 cents of every dollar spent went toward paying \$5.2 billion in salaries to Indiana workers.

Because, ultimately, our city's workers are the reason we're taking this step today. Of the 134,000 Hoosier workers employed directly in the tourism industry, more than 80,000 live and work right here in Indianapolis. And that number doesn't include our skilled trade workforce, the construction workers and carpenters, electricians, and plumbers who make projects like this one possible. They're all counting on us to keep our city competitive, to keep Indy punching above its weight against bigger cities, cities with mountains or beaches or even just better weather.

Well, we can't build mountains. Or beaches. As an architect, believe me—if we could, we would. What we can do, though, what we in Indianapolis have become quite skilled at doing, is building public-private partnerships that drive responsible development from which the entire community benefits. It's not flashy, I grant you, but it is effective. It is nerdy. It's Hoosierchutzpah at work.

Thank you.