Laura Spanjian’s speech

Thank you so much. I will be quick. They asked us to say really what or who inspires us to do the work that we do or the work that I do. Mayor Annise Parker gave me the opportunity to come here and be the sustainability director. I owe a lot to her and she inspires me all the time.

My family inspires me. My partner and my beautiful son inspire me to insure that we have a healthy and a great Houston for when he grows up, but really the reason that I get up every single day and I’m so excited to go to work and the reason I love my job is really because of all the people in this room and all of Houston - all Houstonians, because Houston has amazing people and they want a fantastic, beautiful city that is livable and resilient and sustainable and I am just one cog in the wheel to help make that happen.

I might launch programs or initiatives, but really it's all of you that partake of them. If you didn’t want them, I wouldn’t be here today. So it’s really about you. They say that cities are only as good as the people and Houston has great people and that is why I love this city so much.

This city thinks big. It has thought big around our economy and jobs and industry. We are big thinkers. And now lets think big about quality of life and sustainability. Let’s do it big. Lets not have hundreds of bikes in our bike share program, lets have thousands of bikes. Lets close streets. Lets have thousands of bike lanes on street and off street. Lets have thousands of electric cars and hybrids on the roads and charging stations for everybody.

Lets shut streets on Sundays to pedestrians and bicyclists. Lets have Complete Streets and really do that right and make sure that streets are more than just for cars. Lets build vegetable gardens in every neighborhood and in every school. Lets teach people how to tend gardens and to eat local food. We can do that. Right?

We can ensure that we are never again on a top ten list that says the top ten worst cities for air quality. Lets never again on those lists anymore. We can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, improve our air quality, we can have the city that we all want – a modern cosmopolitan beautiful fun fantastic dynamic engaged active city. We already have so much of that, but I know we all want more, and we can do that all together. So I look forward to continuing to work with all of you so closely to make this an even better city than it is today.