

Broke City: "Tramcar!"
By Andrew Heaton

Interior: Conference Room. A small group of young professionals mingle and take their seats.

Caption: "Henley Young Professionals Foundation."

People in business attire are eating lunch. MAYOR TIM DORSEY sits at a table amicably chatting. A lady in a suit, GRACE, bangs the lectern gavel.

GRACE

Could I have everyone's attention please? Thank you. I want to thank Mayor Dorsey for joining us today. So let's give him a big YPF welcome. Mayor?

DORSEY

Thank you, it's great to be here. I'd just like to say how happy I am to see young professionals working and starting their families in Henley. And I want you to know that everybody over at City Hall is working hard to make this a safe, prosperous, and beautiful town to live in. Here are some highlights of what we've accomplished since my inauguration. Janet?

A slideshow presentation begins behind the mayor. Picture: raccoons ruining a picnic.

DORSEY

While we've only been able to reduce the raccoon population by 20%, our "Humans Are Still Technically The Boss" campaign has made significant progress in establishing homo sapien dominance over parks, schools, and the Henley Senior Home during daylight hours. That's right: you and your

family can now picnic in Aaron
Burr Park without being accosted
by raccoons!

[Applause]

DORSEY CONT'D

Although I remind you:

Picture: A colored map of Henley. A small portion of the corner is gray, with "RACCOON ZONE" underneath it. There is also a picture of a raccoon bearing its fangs

DORSEY CONT'D

The town dump is still a
designated Raccoon Zone. Only go
during daylight hours, use the
buddy system, and bring fruit or
Oreos as an offering to the alpha
raccoon. As long as you're
deferential and come baring gifts,
the raccoons will tolerate your
incursion. Probably. Next,

Picture: Dorsey cutting a ribbon, smiling. The ribbon is stretched
over two traffic blockers, on top of a manhole cover.

DORSEY CONT'D

I'm proud to report that *all* of
our sewer mains are now covered.
Prop 18, which raise a tenth of a
cent on sales taxes March through
April, was contentious...

Cut to: a man in a suit glowering, arms folded

DORSEY CONT'D

But our new fleet of manhole
covers is a marked improvement
over the old stopgap measure of
leaving trampolines at the bottom.
And far and above the previous
city policy of "Darwinian
evolution."

[Applause]

Picture: Spooky haunted house

DORSEY

After speaking with the Henley Tourism Board, we've renamed Haunted House Row to Sunshine Boulevard. And it's no longer located in the Old Stabbing District. No sir, it's smack dab in the middle of the scenic Henley Historical Knife Crime District!

[Applause]

Picture: A bobcat

DORSEY CONT'D

Now, you may recall that, after raccoons abandoned Aaron Burr Park, a gang of bobcats with a taste for poodle blood filled in the power vacuum. Through quick, decisive action and the crack shot work of Henley Animal Control, we were able to nick that migration in the bud and scare away all the bobcats.

Picture: angry bobcat-raccoon hybrid

DORSEY CONT'D

Unfortunately the surviving bobcats sought refuge with the raccoon population, giving rise to a new and far more aggressive hybrid species of "bobcoons"

Picture of the Map again. "RACCOON ZONE" has been changed to "BOBCOON ZONE"

DORSEY CONT'D

However these are primarily concentrated in the town dump, so have little to no effect. And, finally,

Picture: Mayor Dorsey standing on top of a manhole cover holding a watermelon

DORSEY CONT'D

The Henley Watermelon & Nose
Flute Festival was, I think, the
finest we've ever had.

[Applause]

DORSEY CONT'D

Thank you. Well that's all the
updates I'll subject you to. What
I'd really like to do is hear from
you. I want to hear your concerns
about Henley and how we can keep
improving it. Yes?

The Mayor calls on GEORGE

GEORGE

Hi, I'm George Larkney and I'm
some kind of attorney. When are we
getting a streetcar?

DORSEY

What?

GEORGE

A streetcar. Like in San
Francisco. Why don't we have one
of those?

DORSEY

Uh...

MARTY COOPER, Dorsey's chief of staff, raises his hand.

COOPER

Tim? May I?

DORSEY

Sure, go ahead Marty.

COOPER

Hi, I'm Marty Cooper, Mayor
Dorsey's chief of staff. I handle
a lot of the policy nitty-gritty.
What part of town do you live in,
sir?

GEORGE

Just give us the streetcar!

COOPER

Right, excellent statement, thank
you. We already have a bus system
in place, and so it just makes
more sense to buy busses as
needed.

DEBORAH stands up

DEBORAH

Hi, I'm Deborah, Pi Kappa Gamma
alumnis and chief creative banker
at Henley Federal Credit Union.
I'd just like to say that I did a
study abroad in Milan, and I *loved*
the streetcars. They're beautiful
and elegant and I for one think we
should be supporting public
transit! Also I lost my virginity
on a streetcar. Thank you.

COOPER

Wow, how... Okay. Great, thank you.
So I understand that streetcars
are more glamorous than busses,
but I think you'll agree with me
that they're not very practical.
Busses are cheaper than
streetcars, we can easily redirect
their routes in the event of
construction or accidents, and
they use existing streets. Whereas
if we installed a streetcar, on
top of the costs, we'd have to
eminent domain a lot of homes and
businesses, and subject the city
to several years of traffic
congestion from construction.

MINDY stands up

MINDY

Except that, once you've *built* the street car, that will *lessen* the traffic congestion, because more people will be using public transit. Check and mate!

She drops the mic.

COOPER

So first, I don't want to have to go over this again, but please don't drop the mic when you're done talking. Our mic budget is stretched thin as it is. Second, Henley is a low-density populace primarily composed of suburban neighborhoods. A streetcar probably wouldn't do much to alleviate traffic congestion.

BRENDAN stands up, and grabs the microphone

BRENDAN

Brendan Young here. I'm a knee doctor. I just want to say that streetcars are easily five thousand times better than busses! They'd make the city more picturesque and increase tourism. And I *also* lost my virginity on a street car!

He drops the mic.

Dorsey pulls out a microphone from inside his blazer for some reason.

DORSEY

Mayor Dorsey chiming in. I lost my virginity on a Ferris Wheel, and then inside of a 1997 Ford Rambler.

COOPER

Tim, we don't-

DORSEY

Here's what we're going to do. My wetblanket chief of staff makes some good points about math. But you guys *also* make a good point about how cool streetcars are. And ultimately we work for you. Not *math*.

CUT TO:

An old lady at the back stands up.

OLD LADY

I lost my virginity inside an electric streetcar in 1954.

She breaks her microphone in half.

DORSEY

Ha! Great, what a cougar. So here's the plan. We're not going to build a streetcar. It's just not feasible. But we *will* build a tram.

Dorsey drops his microphone, smiles. The room gives him a standing ovation.

GRACE

Well that was a productive Q&A with the mayor! We want to thank Mayor Dorsey and Mr. Cooper for joining us. Please be sure to sign up for our rock climbing excursion on your way out.

Grace slams her microphone down, with gusto.

SCENE 2

INTERIOR: Conference Room

Mayor Dorsey and Marty Cooper sit at a conference table with LINDA SANCHEZ, the city manager.

DORSEY

Holy shit! That's how much does a tram costs? Jesus. We should have just gone with a streetcar.

COOPER

[sighs]

LINDA

It's steep, but that's what the people want. We ran a poll.

Linda holds up a pie chart.

LINDA

Forty-six percent of Henley citizens want a streetcar, and thirty-four percent want a tram.

COOPER

You guys know trams and streetcars are the same thing, right?

DORSEY

That's a whopping eighty percent of voters in favor of a tramcar. What do the remaining twenty percent want?

LINDA

A ski lift.

DORSEY

Linda, I'm glad you took the initiative on this, but next time you run a poll, I think you should give people options to choose from

rather than asking them for their preferences.

LINDA

Call it whatever you want.

DORSEY

Tramcar.

LINDA

Okay, fine. Purchasing a single "tramcar" and laying a basic track along main street is going to cost the city \$800,000.

DORSEY

. . . dollars?

LINDA

Yes, dollars.

DORSEY

Damn! Well, I guess we'll just have to pass a municipal bond to pay for it.

LINDA

I'm not so sure that's a good idea, mayor.

Linda holds up another pie chart.

LINDA

We ran a separate poll about taxes, and 80% of Henley voters are quote "violently, psychotically opposed" to a tax increase. End quote.

COOPER

And the remaining twenty percent—

LINDA

Want a ski lift.

COOPER

Gimme that!

Cooper grabs the poll and starts flipping pages.

COOPER CONT'D

Why did you ask people what kind
of vehicle they lost their
virginity in?

LINDA

We didn't.

DORSEY

Okay, so it *sounds* like we have an
\$800,000 tab, but we can't raise
taxes to pay for it. We're just
going to have to be smart about
accounting and shuffle some
funding around.

Linda passes out binders

LINDA

Here's a summary of Henley's
annual budget.

DORSEY

Well, first off, why are we
spending \$12,000 per year on
microphone repairs? That seems
excessive. Cut that. Just tell
everybody to use their diaphragms.

LINDA

Great. Just another \$788,000 to
go.

DORSEY

Okay, well, it looks like our
biggest expenditure is pension

payments. Can we just trim those back a little?

COOPER

I don't think that's a good idea, Tim. You pretty much got elected on protecting pensions.

CUT TO: Campaign footage of Tim Dorsey at a podium.

DORSEY

Because I am the ONLY candidate up here who has promised to KILL myself if I so much as *touch* pensions! I swear to God, if I take a nickel off pensions I will kill myself and murder my entire family. Dorsey! Dorsey! Dorsey!"

CUT TO: The meeting

DORSEY

Kinda painted myself into a corner on that one. Okay. No cutting pensions.

LINDA

I should note that the entire annual budget is only \$400,000, so even if you did, you'd still have to find a way to raise revenue.

DORSEY

We meet again, *math*.

COOPER

Guys, I know this is a tough obstacle, but it's what the public wants, and we're public servants. The people have spoken: we're going to build that tramcar. All we have to do is figure out a way

to raise \$800,000 dollars without
raising taxes or cutting spending.

DORSEY

Exactly. Let's break. I want
everyone to spend the rest of the
day researching ways the city can
get cold, hard cash. Are there
fees? Slap 'em. Are there loans?
Snag 'em. Leave no stone
uncovered. With God as my witness,
we are *building* that ski lift!

COOPER

Tramcar.

DORSEY

Okay. Go!

Montage : Viewpoint alternates between Linda, Cooper, and Dorsey. At first all three are in their offices reading stacks of books. As the montage continues, only Linda continues reading books. Dorsey begins to exercise, and all of his subsequent montage is a replay of lifting weights or jogging from "Rocky." Cooper engages in a series of pitiful fundraising activities: scooping coins out of a public fountain, a tramcar bake sale, and an NPR-style telethon. Happy, he walks down the street, and falls into an open manhole. Then Linda snaps a book shut.

LINDA

That's it!

SCENE 3:

INTERIOR: Conference room

Cooper is wearing a neck brace.

DORSEY

Okay, what's everybody got?

COOPER

It took a lot of effort, but I'm happy to report that the Citizens Who Want Tethered Busses Committee raised *fourteen thousand dollars* towards the purchase of a new tramcar!

DORSEY

Well, that's a start. Linda?

LINDA:

Statute 552.2!

DORSEY

What the hell is that?

LINDA

A statewide provision designed to quickly develop blighted properties. If the crime rate is three times higher than that of the surrounding community, it can be legally designated as "blighted." Then seized by the city. . . and *sold* to developers.

COOPER

Brilliant! But I don't think our blighted areas will sell for much, will they?

Cooper walks over to a town map.

COOPER CONT'D

That trailer park that keeps catching fire from meth explosions is only valued at \$60,000, and the only reason the Tiling Grout District generates revenue at all is because they're selling counterfeit tiling grout.

LINDA

You need to think outside the box, Marty. What if we *made* a neighborhood "crimeful"?

DORSEY

Go on.

Linda throws a dart at the city map.

COOPER

Hey! We have a rule about that!

Cooper points to a sign reading "No throwing darts at map."

LINDA

Mayor, just pick five or six houses valued at a combined \$800,000 in the same area, then tell the police to be overly aggressive about logging infractions. Improper parking, trash too close to the curb, kids loitering, selling lemonade without a license, noise violations, whatever. Log all that shit and, presto! One crime-filled neighborhood for sale.

DORSEY

Well, I'll be honest with you, Linda. I don't feel *great* about this. But I do think it's in the broader interest of our city, and is clearly the wishes of the

public. We owe it to them to find
a way to *build that ski lift!*

COOPER

Tramcar.

DORSEY

Right, I forgot again. To the
police station!

Dorsey charges out of the room, knocking his chair over.

SCENE 4

Interior: A smoky backroom.

Dorsey and Cooper sit across from POLICE CAPTAIN JOHN PHILIPS, a genial but serious public servant.

DORSEY

So basically, John, we've been getting a lot of complaints about that part of town, and we want to make a move on it, but we can't unless it's legally designated as a blight. So we need you to really focus on it for a couple of weeks, log every infraction, overlook no details.

PHILIPS

All due respect, Mr. Mayor, the police department focuses its resources on actual hot spots. We have a limited amount of officers and hours, and that means we need to maintain discretion on letting smaller infraction slide while focusing on actual, dangerous crime.

DORSEY

Right right, John. And I would never want you to do anything unethical. What I'm telling you is: we're getting lots of complaints from this area. So just, you know, please respond to these complaints, and be very scrupulous about logging any infractions. You don't need to worry about apprehending anybody or arresting anyone. We'll take care of the consequences on our end.

Philips looks at the addresses.

PHILIPS

We haven't had any complaints from this part of town. I think maybe a noise citation around Labor Day, but nothing serious. And of course the bobcoon attacks.

Cooper and Dorsey nod gravely, and mumble about babcoons.

COOPER

Captain Philips, if I may? We appreciate the hard work you and the Police Department put in keeping this city safe. You all are heroes. Yes, we're just pencil pushers over in City Hall, but our job is to think "big picture." And this all fits into the big picture for Henley and its future. We have an obligation as public servants to carry out some really high-end improvement works.

Philips leans forward. He's angry.

PHILIPS

You know what I think? This sounds like a political hit job. I don't know what you're doing, and I don't need to know.

DORSEY

Now John—

PHILIPS

I'm not going to turn our police force into armed lawyers so you can play tinker toys with people's lives and property.

COOPER

Captain, it's not like—

PHILIPS

I swore an oath, and I have a
sacred obligation to protect the
white people who live here!

COOPER

Captain Philips, you — wait, what?
Did you say “white people”?

PHILIPS

Yes I did, and I’m not going to
use the power of the state to
manipulate honest, hard-working
white people just because they
don’t fit into your “plan.”

DORSEY

John, hey, I wanna just pause for
a second. Take a time out for a
second here. I respect your sense
of restraint and ethics and
whatnot, but I feel very
uncomfortable that you want to
protect white people specifically.

COOPER

Yeah, captain, that’s uh, that’s
not alright. I mean, my God, it’s
the twenty-first century. Henley
is a tolerant, cosmopolitan city.

DORSEY

I don’t want to say “racist,” but
you know, actually, it feels kind
of racist.

COOPER

Honestly, Captain Philips, it does
sound very racist. I mean if you
just said “people” or “citizens”
it would’ve been fine, honorable
even, but the racial specificity—

Philips stands up.

PHILIPS

I've had just about enough of this, gentlemen. Let's get something straight: I don't work for you. I'm not a lackey for a bunch of limp-wristed, lispy career politicians!

DORSEY

What do you mean by "lispy," exactly?

PHILIPS

I work for the people of Henley! The good, honest, hard-working white people of this fine city.

COOPER

Yeah, again, Jack, I think we're talking about different things here.

PHILIPS

I'm going back to work. If that 'hotspot' actually has some crime, I'll report it and I'll stop it. Because that's my job, and I'm damn good at it. But otherwise: leave me the hell alone. Good day!

Dorsey and Cooper pause for a moment.

COOPER

That guy is a fucking racist.

DORSEY

Right?!

SCENE 5

EXTERIOR: Suburban street

Dorsey, Cooper, and Linda are assembled on a suburban street corner.

DORSEY

Operation Furtive Tramcar starts
now!

LINDA

I thought we were calling it
Operation A Streetcar Named
Subterfuge?

COOPER

Technically we tabled the motion.

DORSEY

I don't care. Everyone ready?

Cooper holds up a bucket of paint and a brush.

COOPER

I paint the curbs red, turning all
of the street parking into fire
lanes—and rendering every vehicle
illegally positioned.

DORSEY

When I give the signal, my
operatives on the city council
will lower the permissible noise
level by twenty decibels.

LINDA

I put a keg of beer over by that
street post and invited a
fraternity.

DORSEY

Good thinking! If that doesn't
attract crime, I don't know what
will.

LINDA

This.

Linda tosses a pair of tennis shoes in the air, slinging them over a phone line.

COOPER

What's with the shoes?

LINDA

Pretty sure it's a drug thing.

MAYOR

Nice touch!

LINDA

With any luck, we'll trigger a turf war.

Cooper starts painting the curbs. A car rolls up, blasting rap music, driven by TONY, a black man. It stops underneath the tennis shoes.

LINDA

It's working!

Tony rolls down his window.

TONY

You the mayor, right?

DORSEY

...yeah?

TONY

Those sneakers on the phone lines? I'm pretty sure it's a drug thing. Might want to look into that.

DORSEY

Good to know! Thanks.

Tony pulls out his phone.

TONY

J-Bag! It's Tony. I just saw the mayor! What? Oh! In the Henley Historical Knife Crime District. That's right. Yeah. They changed it. Used to be the Stabbing District. Right - scenic as all get out. It's truly a beautiful neighborhood. Love those bigass Victorian haunted mansions. Okay, see you soon. Love you!

Tony drives off; frat boys CLAYTON and KYLE immediately show up

CLAYTON

Hey Kyle! Aren't those your tennis shoes?

KYLE

Those ARE my missing shoes!

CLAYTON

Looks like the work of the Cambino Crime Family.

He pulls out brass knuckles. Kyle pulls out a police truncheon.

KYLE

Looks like we've got ourselves a good 'ol fashioned frat-on-mafia turf war!

COOPER

Turf war? Guys, do you think maybe we've bitten off more than we can chew?

CUT TO:

Interior of the George Larkney household, where a suburban couple are cleaning dishes.

GEORGE

Honey, I was thinking we could finally watch *The Purge* tonight.

GRACE

Oh that sounds like a hoot! That's a scary movie, though. Go tell Brandon and Shelly to play in the yard, so they're not exposed to violence.

They duck, as we hear the sounds of glass shattering and an explosion

CUT TO: Mayor et al, on the street.

There are shouts, clanging noises, and gunshots. *We are seeing reaction shots and hearing sound effects.*

DORSEY

Oh shit!

COOPER

The crime-to-blood ratio here is way off!

DORSEY

Looks like the mafia is fighting the frat boys now!

COOPER

Where did the frat boys get a gatling gun?

LINDA:

[looking up] Is that... Is that a World War I spitfire?

Everyone dives for cover as bullets rain down from above.

DORSEY

It's a bloodbath! Everyone run to the car!

COOPER

We can't! It got towed. We were parked in a designated fire lane!

DORSEY

Really? Wow, I mean, all things considered, that's impressive.

COOPER

Truly.

DORSEY

Well, this it I guess, then. It's been an honor serving with you.

Dorsey looks down, pensive.

DORSEY CONT'D

I guess I won't be needing this anymore.

He pulls a microphone out of his jacket and tosses it off camera, like a hand grenade.

COOPER

I guess, on some level, I always knew I'd wind up dying in a strait of bullet fire brought on by a turf war I helped orchestrate to accomplish property seizure.

LINDA

Me too.

The bullets stop. We hear the frantic screams of men and the angered hissing and roars of bobcats.

LINDA

They've stopped shooting! It's a miracle!

Cooper stands up, smiling

COOPER

It's not a miracle... it's the bobcoons!

More screaming, more hissing

COOPER

Bobcoons love the smell of light beer and terror. But they *hate* sustained banging noises! The turf war must have attracted them, then really pissed them off!

Kyle the frat boy runs by, screaming hysterically and trying to fling off an animal clinging to his scalp.

Dorsey stands up and brushes himself off.

DORSEY

Let's head home, team. I think our work here is done.

SCENE 5

Interior: City Hall.

Mayor Dorsey is seated behind his desk. Marty Cooper enters with a mug and a pot of coffee. Linda is on the couch.

COOPER

Wow, that was some Arbor Day, huh?

DORSEY

You can say that again. Top me
off?

Cooper pours some coffee. An intercom on the desk squawks.

INTERCOM

Mayor Dorsey? This is the
intercom.

DORSEY

I know that!

INTERCOM

Police Captain Philips is here to
see you.

DORSEY

Great, send him in.

Tight shot on Philips. He is proud, but contrite.

PHILIPS

Mr. Mayor, I wanted to personally
hand you this crime report I filed
last night. It's about the
neighborhood you mentioned. It's...
extensive.

DORSEY

Great, thanks John.

PHILIPS

Mr. Mayor, I think I owe you an
apology. You were right about that
neighborhood.

The camera pans out, to reveal that Philips is holding hands
with Tony, the black guy from earlier.

PHILIPS

You were right about... A lot of
things.

Philips and his gay, black lover passionately kiss. Dorsey and
Cooper high-five each other.

CLOSE UP: on Dorsey, who smiles knowingly and winks

CLOSE UP: on Cooper, who hoists his mug in cheers.

CLOSE UP: on a raccoon. It just sort of bobs its head.

CUT TO: Dorsey and Cooper. They high-five.

DORSEY & COOPER

Tramcar!

THE END