

**Mayor Jennifer Fitzgerald  
State of the City Address  
April 15, 2016**

Good afternoon! We are truly blessed to call Fullerton home and I'm honored to lead our community this year as your Mayor.

I thank the North Orange County Chamber for co-sponsoring this state of the city and congratulate you on the early success of your new adventure as the North Orange County Chamber.

A gathering like this wouldn't be possible without our sponsors and I thank you for your generous support.

Thank you Dr. Garcia and CSUF, as well for partnering with the City and the Chamber to bring this annual event back to CSUF...Fullerton IS a college town and it's always good to be together.

And of course, it's only because I have a true partner and friend in this thing with me that I can serve...I would like to recognize my husband, Sean, who is here today.

People like all of us in this room believe in our community so much we devote our time and energy to ensuring its success and future prosperity, not just because may be good for our bottom line or because we personally benefit from it, but because we know Fullerton is not just an address, it is a community of value; a city rich in heritage, whose people are diverse, whose businesses thrive, where people of faith and good will constantly join together to meet local needs.

That's what I want to share with you today-just how far our city has come as a result of all of us working together to make our community the best it can be! The city's theme this year is "Excellence in Service." The late Arthur Ashe was not only a World Tennis Champion but also a world class humanitarian and he stated simply, "Start where you are.

Use what you have. Do what you can.” And that is what we are doing here in Fullerton.

Today’s Fullerton is characterized by accomplishments in the areas of economic development, infrastructure and transportation, public safety, and quality of life. It’s a big list, but before we dig in, we need to cover some of the basics that are important to the foundational health of Fullerton— our budget and pension liability. I know...it’s time to ask for a refill on your coffee, but I promise if you stay with me, this presentation will get more fun!

Through sound financial management by our staff and this City Council - our City’s General Fund reserve balance is a very healthy \$13.6 million, significantly higher than the Council’s 10% reserve policy.

After struggling through the recession, this is an incredible accomplishment. We’ve built this reserve through our strong and well-diversified tax base of residential, commercial and industrial properties. And we’ve simply gotten out of the way and allowed investment to happen in Fullerton.

While the economic outlook of Fullerton remains positive, we are mindful of balancing the increasing and competing needs for services against the limited resources available. We are effectively addressing our city’s retirement liabilities. Every public agency in California is dealing with this issue and in Fullerton, we are demonstrating our commitment to fully fund our future obligations. We recently received confirmation that our funded level is now at 83% for our largest employee group, up from a funded level of 67% just 5 years ago.

The point here—if you didn’t refill your coffee cup--is that this Council is very sensitive to not just keep public retirement benefits in check but we are also relentless in our commitment to responsible stewardship of

the City's current finances. Ok, on to the exciting world of business, transportation, public safety, housing and parks!

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

As a daughter of a small businessman and former Chamber President, I love to see our local economy thrive! From our hawkish protection of the industrial potential of the 43-acre former Beckman-Coulter Headquarters site to CJ Foods' multiple expansion projects, to our current focus on the Fox Block development, we are committed to growing our business sectors.

We also have a few secret weapons—our colleges and universities who all come together to promote workforce development; our Economic Development Action Team, or EDAT, that helps business owners expand and establish new businesses in Fullerton; and our new city Economic Development Commission (EDC) which is led by former Chamber President Gary Graves.

Just last week, the City Council approved the EDC's recommendation to update and expand our filming and photography program by partnering with FilmLA. This partnership will stimulate more filming in Fullerton, encouraging further investment in Fullerton's businesses and services for the production crews and actors. FilmLA will provide marketing, proactive community outreach and intensive filming activity oversight and accountability to protect neighborhoods—and all at no cost to the City. We are only the second city in Orange County to partner with FilmLA and I know you join me in eagerly anticipating more views of Fullerton from the Big Screen.

With an unemployment rate less than 5%, below both the State and National averages our business climate is strong as you'll see in this video.

---

(VIDEO – Economic Development)

Before we move on from here, I have to address the changing landscape of our retail economy. The internet has changed everything AND as you know, sales tax continues to be one of the biggest revenue sources for local government. When the State of California decided to tax internet sales, most people assumed that the move would level the playing field for cities like ours without traditional shopping or auto malls - unfortunately, it didn't. The state government neglected to make needed changes to the state tax code. To put it simply, the allocation formulas for who gets sales tax continue to be based on the geographic location of retail establishments rather than the consumer population's spending. Because of that, cities like ours are getting cheated. We estimate we've lost almost \$1 million in the last year alone.

Our community must take the lead in righting this inequity and to that end, I'm calling on the North Orange County Chamber to partner with the city in creating a community coalition, whose mission is to make sure cities like ours up and down the State of California receive our fair share of sales tax by changing the allocation of sales tax from on-line purchases to be based on population rather than brick and mortar retail locations.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION**

*Moving on*, we are a city on the move; we're a transportation city--built on the railroad with Orange County's only municipal airport. When it comes to infrastructure our city had to start where we are, use what we have and do what we can. And we've done a lot!

The first phase of our airport remodel was completed last October, with the lobby renovation and the return of the restaurant. Wings Café is bringing people back to the airport. It's owned and operated by Brian

and Sherri White, who are here with us today. The second phase of the airport's renovation is targeted to begin in 2018 and will provide a much-needed face-lift to the exterior of the airport thus adding value to West Fullerton residents and businesses that operate out of and adjacent to the airport. Did you know more than 60,000 flights take place at our airport every year? That's getting pretty close to 200 flights a day-take that John Wayne!

The Fullerton train station really connects Fullerton to the entire region of Southern California. Our Train Station services more than 3,000 commuters every day through Metrolink and Amtrak, making it the busiest Metrolink station in Orange County.

When you are in your car around town, you know we are in the trenches with many road repairs and construction projects. Last year, the City of Fullerton kicked off a five-year, \$184 million capital improvements campaign with the largest percentage of the money being spent on needed road, water, and sewer reconstruction projects. I know all the construction is inconvenient, but we're seeing positive results in neighborhoods all across our community.

Additionally, the City of Fullerton has partnered with OCTA on the OC Bridges project-the railroad grade separations providing increased traffic flow on State College Boulevard and Raymond Avenue, which are both targeted for completion in 2017 and 2018.

Now, let's go to our next video, which will further highlight our infrastructure and transportation accomplishments, as well as touch on initiatives that the council will be considering in the coming months.

(VIDEO - Infrastructure and Transportation)

And yet even with our accomplishments, more remains: we must solve for "last mile" connectivity, mitigate student parking throughout our

education district, better manage our downtown public parking assets, make progress on our phase two airport renovation and move forward on our transportation center specific plan.

Infrastructure is local government's primary function and I'm confident this City Council will continue to prioritize improvement and investment in the bones of Fullerton.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Along with infrastructure, Public Safety is job #1 for our city. Our Police Department and Fire Department are the best in our region. It's critical we retain the highest quality police and fire personnel in order to maintain the quality and consistency of our public safety efforts. We have prioritized giving our public safety the resources they need to succeed. From our innovative exploration regarding a fire department merger with Brea to being the first police department in Orange County to institute the use of body cameras to the hiring of five new patrol officers, we're making sure Fullerton is safe!

Please join me in congratulating Fullerton and Brea Fire Departments Chief Wolf Knabe on receiving the prestigious League of California Cities Helen Putnam Award for their Fire Resource Sharing Program.

I'm also proud of the fine work our Police Department is doing to keep our community safe. Our officers are involved in our community in service organizations like Rotary, the Fullerton Collaborative and OCUnited, and take their job seriously. In fact, earlier this year, one of our officers, Sgt. Craig Odom, saved a choking child's life at a local restaurant. It's that kind of courage and presence of mind under pressure that really makes a difference for the safety of our community.

---

Another recent example of quick thinking in an emergency situation happened recently at our Community Center, when a patron went into cardiac arrest. Members of the Parks and Recreation staff as well as nearby patrons, called 911, but didn't wait for the paramedics to arrive; they immediately started performing CPR, by utilizing an AED on the scene, and once emergency crews arrived, led them to the individual, who ultimately survived.

In this next video, we'll hear about how our businesses are partnering with law enforcement in our downtown retail district and more about our public safety and nonprofit collaborations in Orange County and Fullerton.

(VIDEO-Public Safety)

We are absolutely keeping our city safe by being vigilant in our support of public safety and there is more to be done. This City has partnered with neighboring cities and the County of Orange to purchase property that will become a 24/7 multi service center and emergency shelter. Many thanks go to Supervisors Nelson and Spitzer for their courageous leadership and relentless passion on this. This new asset should be open in 2017.

We must continue to support future patrol officer hirings to make sure we can meet any challenge that comes.

And our aging fire stations are another challenge. We're currently working to modernize each station and I'm pleased to announce today that we recently received a letter of intent from Ketchum University – Ketchum is interested in acquiring our fire station 5 property on Yorba Linda Boulevard next door to their campus – they need our property for their upcoming expansion project – which is really exciting all by itself and I know we all look forward to hearing more from them about that – the fact that we could then build a new fire station – potentially on Cal

State Fullerton's property on the northeast corner of State College and Yorba Linda Boulevard is icing on the cake. This is a win-win!!

## **QUALITY OF LIFE**

So a city can be safe, well maintained, and economically strong, but how does that city remain that special place we want to call home? We're a big city with a small town feel because we invest in our people, we honor our heritage through preservation, and we grow opportunities to gather as a community and work for common causes; we care about our neighbors!

Not only have we been working to end homelessness through the 24/7 multi service center effort, We took steps last year to stabilize City Lights, a permanent housing community that targets those most at risk for homelessness. By bringing in the John Stewart Co and their incredible social services representative, Michelle Manchester, City Lights is a safe, quality housing option that prevents homelessness in Fullerton. Michelle is here today. Michelle, stand up so we can thank you for your service to our community.

This year, across our 23 square miles, new housing is being built. Soon, we'll see the grand opening of both new senior apartments and market rate Class A apartments in our downtown. In Orange County, we are not building enough housing for our growing population. According to the Orange County Business Council's Workforce Housing scorecard, Orange County has a housing deficit of over 50,000 units. If every community doesn't address it, that deficit will likely grow to 100,000 units by 2040. In every community there is a tension between development and the community. I've heard it said that homebuilders can build a house anywhere! That's why we carefully considers each housing proposal that is presented because we are dedicated to ensuring that new housing compliments current neighborhoods and is consistent with Fullerton's heritage and character. Malden Station,

Lennar's newest development of 200 apartments on Santa Fe at Highland in the SOCO District and the upcoming Watt Companies' community of 17 single family homes on Lark Ellen in North Fullerton, are great examples of this Council's thoughtful consideration of community character and appropriate density.

But it's not just the new housing that we celebrate. This year we also designated the Hillcrest neighborhood as a historic preservation zone to ensure that neighborhood's rich architectural and cultural history will continue to be enjoyed for generations to come.

With 50 parks in Fullerton, there are always projects in the pipeline. In 2016 we will see the groundbreaking on a long awaited restoration of Fullerton's signature park, Hillcrest Park.

As I said, Fullerton has 50 parks...We need two more parks though. It's time to move forward with both development and preservation on the West Coyote Hills property and we need to open the adjacent Bob Ward Nature Preserve. Today I'm pleased to announce that design concepts for the Bob Ward Nature Preserve will be coming to city council for approval later this summer, and plans are underway right now to open the public trails within the reserve by year's end.

The second park is Pearl Park. There are still neighborhoods in our city without park space. One such neighborhood is the Garnet neighborhood. Just last month the City Council approved a grant application that will provide the funding for the purchase of property in the Garnet neighborhood that the residents there have already named, Pearl Park. Every child deserves a safe place to play...Garnet kids do too and it's my goal this year to build this park.

Yet with all of the city's focus on investing in our neighborhoods, the city can't do it alone nor should we. Luckily, this community agrees. The third annual Love Fullerton is coming up on Saturday, April

30<sup>th</sup>. This year, close to 7000 people will flood six North Orange County cities to bring some much needed love to places throughout our communities. Including the projections for the upcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Love Fullerton, in our community alone, approximately 75 different improvement projects on public property will have been completed, by more than 8,000 volunteers and this work will have saved taxpayers more than \$650,000! This movement really epitomizes the spirit of Fullerton to me.

And I think we just might highlight it more in this next video!

(VIDEO-Quality of Life)

### **MADE IN FULLERTON**

Our city is strong and we are well positioned to meet the challenges and opportunities of the coming months and years. Thank you for your investment in our community, it's your optimism and enthusiasm in our future that gives me added confidence we're on the right track. Before we close, think about what is made in Fullerton...it's a question we have been asking around town...here's what some of you already came up with.

(VIDEO-Made in Fullerton)

As Theresa Harvey joins me on stage for some important announcements, I just have to say—I love Fullerton, don't you?!