



Mayor Greg Sebourn State of the City Address March 19, 2015

Good morning! Thank you all for being here today and for supporting the Fullerton Chamber of Commerce.

Thank you, also, to the members of the Chamber's Board, the many individuals who worked so hard to bring this event to fruition, and the numerous sponsors who have contributed both time and money making this possible.

Also, thank you to my beautiful wife Stacey, my children, and extended family joining me here today.

I want to take this moment and wish a very special woman a very happy birthday – HAPPY BIRTHDAY MOM!

It's no mystery that I am a licensed professional surveyor. So, you may find a few comparisons to surveying and mapping in today's program.

Do we have any history buffs here? Ok, among the land surveying community Mt. Rushmore is known as the "mountain with three surveyors and some other guy..."

So to my history buffs, which of the four presidents was not a land surveyor? Come on... I think I may have heard the answer over here...Roosevelt. That's right, Teddy Roosevelt.

When I was preparing this message staff asked if I wanted to have my image carved into the Fullerton hills. For the record, I declined the offer.

So, as a land surveyor we use geometry on maps to understand where we are at. To do so, you need to know where you were. And to go forward, you must know where you were, where you are, and where you want to go. In surveying terms we call looking back the "backsight" and we call the looking forward the "foresight". And where we are at? The "point of beginning".

I began my term as mayor with much reflection on how our City came to be where it is today. I will share with you my perspective on where we were, what we are doing, and what I have challenged us to achieve before the year is up.

City staff has dubbed my key initiatives as the Four Pillars to Building Success. I think Chi-Chung (wave Chi-Chung) first dubbed my key initiatives as Greg's Four Pillars. And it was Theresa Harvey who added the phrase Building Success. Thank you both Chi-Chung and Theresa for all your help!

Customer Service is the first Pillar. Our friend the non-surveyor of Mt. Rushmore, Teddy Roosevelt, once said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

It is my belief that Quality Service begins with Customer Service. We have some departments like Parks & Rec as well as the Library that excel at Customer Service. Other departments seem to struggle with interpersonal skills. I think this is simply a result of the culture. That is, we have been doing it the same way for so long, no one knows any other way. It is compounded by the necessity and emphasis to have employees with extraordinary technical skills and valuing technical capabilities over other skills.

I want to take this opportunity to thank City Manager Joe Felz for responding to my call to improve customer service. He has already approved and scheduled training for several key staff. This is a baby step, but it is a step nonetheless in the right direction. We have so many employees who love their job, are great at their job, but maybe one-on-one with the public is just not in their skill set. Let's show them how to empathize with the public by finding results, not road blocks. Let's follow Roosevelt's wisdom and show the public that we care.

When I say our staff bleeds for this city, I am being quite literal. Last month the CEO of the Red Cross, Darrin Greenlee, stopped by City Hall to say thanks and commend the City's staff for donating blood. Fullerton staff donated 120 times and saved over 350 lives as a result! I think these folks deserve a round of applause.

Ok, enough from me, let's check out this video...

VIDEO 1

I'd like to recognize three key executives who are instrumental in the successful implementation of our new Customer Service campaign. City Manager Joe Felz, Director of Human Resources Gretchen Beatty, and Director of Administrative Services Julia James please stand and be recognized.

[APPLAUSE]

The Second Pillar is Infrastructure.

Who agrees Fullerton roads are pretty bad? I know! And who hasn't been delayed over the past year due to construction?

The delays you are experiencing are the inroads of progress.

We paved 7 miles in 2014 – that's more than double what we paved in the previous 5 years combined!

And it's not just pavement, its water lines, sewer lines, and storm drains. We are replacing our infrastructure at an unheard of pace to make up for decades of neglect.

We are also working with OCTA on two major projects that, when complete, will allow you to move unhindered under the train tracks on Raymond and State College. This is Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroads mainline east west. It is one of the busiest rail corridors in the U.S. These projects will take more than two years to complete and are extremely complex engineering projects due to the numerous buried utilities and drainage systems.

The goal is to end conflicts between motorists and trains by separating the two rights of way. This also allows for you to get to work quicker so you can be more productive.

Let's enjoy this next video:

VIDEO 2

We have come a long way in our work to improve the infrastructure. The water system, sewer system, and storm drains are well funded and we have implemented a long-term strategy for repairing and replacing these.

The City is large and its infrastructure management nearly unruly. It takes a dedicated staff of professionals to manage these major projects. Public works Director and City Engineer Don Hoppe and his team of engineers and technicians work around the clock to keep the water flowing, and the sewers clear. Join me in commending Don and his team.

[APPLAUSE]

As improved as our infrastructure may be, there is more to be done.

I have called upon our Citizens Infrastructure Review Committee to look at a long-term management plan for our roads.

I have asked the Committee to assist staff with quantifying our deficiencies so that we can determine our liabilities. In turn, this council and future councils will be charged with finding appropriate funding sources to implement a long-term solution.

Infrastructure serves our neighborhoods. They go hand-in-hand and my third Pillar focuses on Neighborhood Identity.

I don't think there is one among us who doesn't believe that the neighborhoods are not the reason we are all here. These are our customers, our clients, and my constituents.

We have the best schools, the best community events, and the best businesses. All of which comprise our neighborhoods.

This Council has seen a number of projects and ideas come before us over the past few years. Some of the issues before us have caused me to ponder "who is the neighborhood?" What defines the neighborhood?

I believe there have been a few attempts at identifying certain communities and their respective boundaries. However, I believe we fell short on this more than once.

My goal is to understand the community identity of our neighborhoods. Each is unique. There is a sense of identity that is associated with neighborhood schools. There is a sense of neighborhood identity associated with geography, even parks. Did you know we have 52 parks and 28 miles of recreational trails?

If you drill down a little closer, you find even more unique qualities within the neighborhood that cause residents and businesses to identify in their own way.

One attempt to understand neighborhood identity can be found in the Downtown Core and Corridor Specific Plan.

Fullerton has been placed in the national spotlight recently being dubbed among the snobbiest, most romantic, and most economically diverse cities in the US.

Fullerton is also one of the safest cities in OC thanks to the dedication and hard work of our men and women in our police and fire departments. I see that both our Chief of Police, Dan Hughes, and our Fire Chief, Wolfgang Knabe are in the audience. Let's have our chiefs stand and would you join me in thanking Chief Hughes and Chief Knabe and their teams for making us one of the safest cities in the OC.

[APPLAUSE]

Let's view this next video:

VIDEO 3

It takes a comprehensive team at City Hall to coordinate and manage the policies and programs we need to keep our neighborhoods safe, unique, prosperous and vibrant. If I may ask the following to stand: Hugo Curiel, Director of Parks and Recreation; Karen Haluza, our new Director of Community Development; and Maureen Gebelein our Library Director. Please join me in thanking these leaders for making Fullerton ideal for both families and businesses.

[APPLAUSE]

And finally, ladies and gentlemen, we come to my fourth and final pillar: Business Development.

Our local businesses are the engine of this city. It's not me, or any other single person; it is the collective horse power of our businesses.

Recognizing the necessity for businesses to flourish for the success of our future, I have chosen to work closely with the Fullerton Chamber of Commerce. The City and the Chamber are vested partners in the vitality and health of our local economy. It is imperative that businesses big and small are given every opportunity to succeed and grow.

As a resident of the City of Fullerton I would like to thank all of our businesses for the risks they take and the investments they make. Without them, the City would not have the revenues needed to sustain the quality of life here that we all cherish so much.

As a city we must continuously work to build relationships with our existing businesses and property owners and we must also continuously work to attract new businesses to serve as that economic engine.

We must work with the Chamber of Commerce to create a network of business resources and effectively communicate with those industries which are consistent with the values of our community and yet can also provide the greatest potential revenue stream for the City.

Thankfully, businesses are growing in Fullerton.

We have nearly 12,000 registered businesses in Fullerton – and the trend is growing. In 2013, we had almost 1,500 new business registrations. And last year, we saw an 8% increase in new business registrations.

Businesses large and small are coming to Fullerton. And existing businesses are thriving here in Fullerton.

Last November, St. Jude Hospital opened up their beautiful tower to expand services to patients in Fullerton and all over Orange County.

One of the City's largest sales tax generators, Costco, celebrated its 30th Anniversary this year. We appreciate the investments that Costco has recently made in renovating their store and we hope they plan to celebrate their 60th Anniversary here with us too.

Just last month I had the privilege of cutting the ribbon for the Grand Re-Opening of the new Sam's Club in Fullerton. This was the first new Sam's Club in over eight years in the State of California. It was a great day, and a symbol of Fullerton's growth and exceptional partnerships.

During the first month of my role as Mayor of Fullerton, I presided over the signing of an historic agreement with KITA - the Korean Trade and Investment Association. KITA is a highly regarded business membership organization for multi-national corporations in Southern California whose parent companies/ headquarters are based in South Korea.

With the help of the Fullerton Economic Development Commission, the agreement was developed to provide a framework to facilitate assistance to each other's industries, business sectors such as: Automotive and Aviation; Culture and Entertainment; Education; Food Production, Green Technology; Transportation and Logistics, and Construction and Community Development.

Business relationships like the one with KITA are essential for our community. I believe we must continually retain and attract diverse businesses to serve as an economic engine for the City. The partnership with KITA demonstrates the City of Fullerton's commitment in creating a pro-business environment powered by quality infrastructure and excellent service that supports the needs of industry.

You know what is exciting...this momentum is continuing and it's global. Exactly one week ago, in this very room, we welcomed to Fullerton a group of business and government leaders including representatives from the District Export Council of Southern California, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea, the U.S. Customs and Korea Customs officials for the third anniversary of the signing of the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement, known as (KORUS FTA).

These kinds of relationships and partnerships are foundational to "Building Successes" in our community.

To sustain success you have to build upon your assets.

In Fullerton there's no better example of a valuable asset than our Fullerton Airport. Under the leadership of our airport manager, Brendan O'Reilly, we have seen tremendous improvements to this city jewel.

As I'm speaking today, construction is taking place at the tower for a new lobby area, offices and the much-awaited "Wings Restaurant." You need to mark your calendar for the next "Airport Day," Saturday, May 9. Everything may not be completed by then but it'll be very close....we will soon welcome the NEW Fullerton Airport.

Speaking of the Airport, can you guess who's chosen to come to Fullerton to "Build their Successes?" The Channel 4 News Helicopter team has chosen Fullerton Airport to be their Orange County home for breaking news. By having their helicopter here in Fullerton, Channel 4 is now able to arrive "at the scene" a good 20 minutes before anyone else...a crucial competitive edge in the news business.

Channel 4 is realizing what businesses in Fullerton have long been aware of....we are a destination city for businesses.

As much as we value our large businesses, we must never forget the critical role of our small businesses.

I tip my hat to Theresa Harvey and the Chamber of Commerce staff for always looking out for our businesses. Her leadership in bringing Small Business Saturday from American Express at the end of every November has made Fullerton a model city for the support of small businesses.

The Chamber's ability to champion small businesses is why a small business like "Oh Hello Friend," at the corner of Amerige and Harbor Blvd had their best sales day of the year on Small Business Saturday.

The small business benefitted from the exposure on Small Business Saturday and the shop, full of arts and crafts, has since been profiled by media outlets such as the OC Weekly, OC Metro, and OC Register.

No doubt you have often heard that Fullerton feels like a small town with all the amenities of a large city. That's what the owners of the multi-national firm, KMW GigaTera must have felt when they decided to come to Fullerton over a decade ago. KMW is one of the global leaders in wireless communications with offices in China, Japan, Korea and the US as well.

However, like many large multi-national corporations, they have many other business ventures - one of which is located right here in Fullerton.

The Fullerton office specializes in a full-line of interior and exterior LED fixtures. KMW has been in business in Fullerton since early 2001, leasing an industrial building off of Orangethorpe. Since that time, they have decided to make a permanent transition and acquire a building in Fullerton, ironically, right across the street from where they had their original lease.

Since 2014, KMWGigatera has started the assembly of LED products and fixtures right here in Fullerton and are proud to count Fullerton as one of their strategic international offices.

From multi-national corporations to innovative entrepreneurs to family businesses – Fullerton continues to grow its diverse and successful business base. This final video helps to illustrate the importance of Economic Development and the crucial role it plays in “Building Success” here in Fullerton.

Run Video #4

If I can have our members of the City's Economic Development Commission (Chair Gary Graves, Vice Chair Rhonda Shader, Ted Kim, Roger Burtner, Theresa Harvey, Thomas Babcock and Michael Kim) as well as Nicole Bernard, our Economic Development Manager, stand and be acknowledged for their fine work of helping bring businesses into Fullerton and serving existing business so that together they can build many years of success in this great city.

[APPLAUSE]

Conclusion:

I am pleased to say that Fullerton is “Building Successes” from its core services to its infrastructure to the neighborhoods and to our businesses. We have accomplished so much and yet, there is still a great deal more that we have to do.

I want to share one bit of good news. A couple of nights ago, at our City Council meeting, I was able to get approval to direct staff to investigate potential implementation of a “Fee Waiver” for local businesses and residents. I want to thank my colleague and Mayor Emeritus Bruce Whitaker for introducing this concept. I believe a “fee waiver” will help stimulate investment in the local economy, encourage more community engagement and help home and business owners comply with building safety codes.

In the coming months you will see our residents and businesses come together for the annual “Love Fullerton” event on May 9. We'll see the completion of the Malden Station at Highland with attractive new homes and businesses; the opening of Dripp Coffee and Wings Restaurant. And of course, we'll all come together in our very own fireworks show on July 4th, celebrating the freedoms and foundations not just of Fullerton, but that of our great nation.

Before I make my exit, Theresa, could you join me at the podium please? I would like to again thank the Chamber of Commerce for inviting me to speak at their 15th annual state of the city event and congratulate them on their 120th anniversary year. Theresa, on behalf of the City Council and staff, please accept these flowers as a token of our thanks for your hard work and efforts to make Fullerton a business friendly city.

[APPLAUSE]

Lastly, I am obligated to point out that this venue here, the Fullerton Community Center, would make a great location for any of your business or personal needs... as you can see it is not only great for seminars, but it is also great for weddings and other special events... make sure to check out the Fullerton Community Center webpage for more information!

Thank you very much.

May God bless Fullerton our great state of California and the United States of America.

(confirm chamber program to finalize appropriate closing transition)