

# Full text of Mayor Sam Liccardo's State of the City speech

Good morning, San Jose! Hello Gunderson Grizzlies!

For those of us celebrating the Lunar New Year, Chuc Mung Nam Moi and Gung Hay Fat Choy! Mohammed Chaudhry, thank you for all that you do to lift aspirations and opportunities for thousands of our children throughout the Valley.

Thank you to all of our honorees who received awards today for your service. Thank you, in particular, to our dedicated city employees, many of whom have sacrificed much to serve during some very difficult years. Thanks also to Norberto Duenas and Dave Sykes for your collaborative, reinvigorating leadership over the past two years.

I'd like to thank a few people for joining us in the audience today, starting with my incredible wife, Jessica, for her love and patience, and for spending Valentine's Day weekend with me in this intimate setting in a high school gym with 1,000 of our good friends. I'm so proud of her important work helping disconnected youth to acquire education and job skills.

I'd also like to thank my Dad, Sal Liccardo, for joining us today— he was always my role model of loving sacrifice and integrity.

I'd like to thank my incredible team who worked so hard to prepare today's celebration, led by Ahmad Chapman and David Low.

Finally, I'd like to thank each of you for joining us this morning. You should know that attendance counters from this year's presidential inauguration committee report that this is an EVEN bigger crowd than Obama drew on the national mall eight years ago... despite what the photos may say.

As I look out into the audience today, I see many Gunderson students, who bear the young faces of San Jose's promise. I see faces like that of Luis, the child of farm workers who graduated from James Lick High School in 1957. Or Viet, whose refugee family moved to San Jose in 1978, opening a small corner market while Viet attended Bellarmine. Or Khaled, who immigrated to San Jose in 1980 from Afghanistan, and who spent hours working with his Dad at the Flea Market while he finished his studies at Independence High.

From these modest beginnings, Luis, Viet, and Khaled have crafted extraordinary life stories. In 2016, President Obama awarded now-legendary playwright Luis Valdez his second Presidential Medal of the Arts. Viet Thanh Nguyen received literature's highest honor, the Pulitzer Prize, for his work, *The Sympathizer*. Also in 2016, sales of Khaled Hoesenni's two novels, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, exceeded 30 million copies worldwide.

These were the children of San Jose – students like many of you in the audience. Today, they have become three of the greatest story tellers of our age, inspiring millions across the globe. And their lives animate our collective story: the story of San Jose.

Today, our country encounters a uniquely difficult moment. Our national political discourse has disintegrated into a divisiveness that has belittled some, embittered others, and left many dispirited. The rancor pulls many people to extremes, urging some to pull up the drawbridge to exclude our most vulnerable, while others abandon any search for middle ground in a defiant Resistance.

San Jose offers our discordant nation another way. In contrast to the “Tale of Two Nations” that occupies daily headlines, we have a different story to tell. To our divided nation, and to a troubled world, San Jose unveils its “Tale of One City.”

Our story begins with our founding. For hundreds of years, indigenous Ohlone tribes called this “Tamyen Valley” their home, and they remained undisturbed until 1777. That year, a band of sixty-six remarkably diverse settlers – of Spanish, Native American, African, and mixed descent – founded “El Pueblo de San Jose de Guadalupe,” the first civil settlement in California. The group struggled mightily in those early years: against unseasonably torrential rains, flooding, blistering heat, and food shortages. But together, they survived, grew in number, and flourished. Together, they wrote our city's first chapter.

These beginnings speak to San Jose's basic DNA: a diverse people who work together to embrace a common future. The now-one million of us draw from this same fundamental character to tackle the challenges of today.

For example, City Hall struggles to recover from the loss of almost a third of our

workforce over the last decade, frustrating both our underserved residents and our overstretched employees.

So, we worked with courageous leaders on both sides of the ideological aisle – such as labor leaders Ben Field, Sean Kaldor, and Paul Kelly, and business leaders like Matt Mahood and Scott Knies – to enable two critically-needed revenue measures and a pension reform settlement to reach the ballot. Silicon Valley Leadership Group CEO Carl Guardino convened hundreds of leaders throughout the Valley on a traffic relief and road repair measure.

Most importantly, because you, our voters overwhelmingly supported these efforts, we're using those dollars today to restore police staffing, activate our "brownd out" fire companies, provide the homeless with housing, and – with Councilmember Johnny Khamis' advocacy – repave more than 100 miles of city streets. We'll need to keep tightening our belt in the years ahead, to be sure, but I am proud to see how we've pulled together to begin restoring those services.

The most important of those services is public safety. We have the most thinly-staffed police department of any major U.S. city. Against a backdrop of rising violence across the nation, I've focused on eliminating the two barriers to rebuilding our department, by resolving battles over pension reform, and reducing disparities in officer pay.

Last year, with a historic coalition of community leaders, our voters approved our negotiated pension settlement that will boost police recruiting and secure more than \$3 billion in savings for our taxpayers. And this week, we approved a long-term wage contract that will make our officers' pay competitive with neighboring cities. Thank you Jennifer Schembri for your negotiating team's great work!

Meanwhile, our hard-working recruiting unit has boosted the size of our incoming classes of police cadets, and by ensuring that departing officers repay their training costs, we'll also ensure that those cadets will serve the same residents who paid for their training.

We're also working smarter to make San Jose safer. By doubling our corps of community service officers, we have increased our ability to respond to property crimes like burglary and larceny, and we'll expand their duties this year.

In San Jose, we're leading the national conversation about police accountability and race. By expanding officer training on racial bias, inviting public scrutiny of arrest data, and deploying body-worn cameras on every officer, Chief Eddie Garcia has set a national gold standard for building community trust. Thank you also to Independent Police Auditor Walter Katz, for your exceptional work.

Finally, our hard-working firefighters have overcome staffing shortfalls to improve emergency medical response in recent months. Councilmember Don Rocha's collaboration with our County partners will enable us to deploy new technologies and align resources to continue this improvement.

Our Tale of One City does not sugarcoat the fact that we have our own divisions: nowhere does the yawning gap between rich and poor appear more palpable than here in Silicon Valley. That's why, in 2015, I worked with the Cities Association and Councilmember Chappie Jones to convene mayors regionally to urge a collective increase in the minimum wage. So far, the city councils of Cupertino, Los Altos, Milpitas, Mountain View, Palo Alto, Sunnyvale, and San Jose are all increasing their minimum wage this year until we reach \$15/hour by 2019. To each of these city leaders – including Rod Sinks, Jeannie Bruins, and Marsha Grilli, who are here with us today – thank you for your collaborative leadership!

Unfortunately, regardless of these changes, thousands of our neighbors will continue to struggle to make rent, and too many remain homeless. That's why we're pushing this year to launch construction of more than 500 apartments for the homeless, to build an innovative micro-housing village, and to partner with local churches to expand a rotating shelter network. Under Jacky Morales-Ferrand's leadership, we're also launching a new initiative with local school districts this year to prevent homelessness among struggling families with children.

Special thanks to County Supervisors Cindy Chavez and Dave Cortese, for your successful billion-dollar bond to boost our collective efforts. Thanks also, Supervisor Mike Wasserman, for your early work with the Housing 1000 campaign.

Due to the collaboration of Destination:Home and many non-profit partners and faith congregations, we housed more than 590 veterans last year. Thanks to Board President Cortese's willingness to lead this effort with me; Dave, together we will end veterans' homelessness in our Valley this year!

Finally, we're also working together to expand job opportunities for many who lack college degrees. Thousands who work in our hotel, restaurant, and transport industries benefit from our airport's 2016 performance, growing air service at a faster rate than any other major airport in the nation, as Kim Becker's team has lured 32 new domestic and international flights. So too, we're expanding small business assistance to our immigrant community, boosting manufacturing jobs by cutting fees and expediting permits for expanding local employers like BenteK, Bestronics, and Space Systems Loral, and launching on-line career skills training at our libraries.

But above all, our Tale of One City embraces San Jose's identity as a city of immigrants. Unlike most other communities, our founding mothers and fathers had different color skin, and spoke different native languages – and to this day, our diversity is our hallmark. Almost 40% of us were born abroad, and our immigrant neighbors enrich our culture, spur our innovation, and reinvigorate our collective passion for freedom.

To those who seek to divide new Americans from the rest of us: we denounce the politics of fear and exclusion. Our police officers will not engage in immigration enforcement that tears our families apart, and sows mistrust in our community. We will fight for our Muslim neighbors. We will fight for our Dreamers. We will fight for any community member earnestly striving to better their families' lives. Thank you Councilmember Raul Perez for working to launch our Office of Immigrant Affairs, which will empower residents with information about their legal rights and options, and help them navigate a path to citizenship.

Together, with our County and non-profit partners, we have a simple message for our immigrant community: Los vamos a respaldar. We've got your back.

The unifying theme of Our Tale of One City, however, has long been that San Jose always looks to the future – and we shape that future through technological innovation and new ideas. Indeed, as our state's first civil settlement and first capital, San Jose's very founding launched one of the world's most transformative ideas: that of California itself.

San Jose continues to look ahead, and with several new councilmembers with fresh ideas, diverse backgrounds, and rich life experience – Councilmembers Sylvia Arenas, Dev Davis, Ian Diep, and Sergio Jimenez – we have never been better prepared for that future.

But to get to our bright future, we'd better not take 101, 85, 680 or 280, because the crippling traffic will make us miss it. We've got to find a better way to move our fast-growing city. Thanks to Carl Guardino's leadership, and the tremendous work of Nuria Fernandez and her team at VTA, we'll launch BART service this year from North San Jose/Berryessa Station. Congratulations Mayor Gonzales on realizing your – and our – dream!

We can't stop there. We must extend BART to Downtown San Jose and Santa Clara, double CalTrain capacity, finish construction of bus rapid transit, and prepare for High Speed Rail.

Those transit systems all converge at a single place: Diridon Station. At Diridon, we will create the Grand Central Station of the West, with seven transit lines bringing hundreds of trains and tens of thousands of commuters daily. Construction will begin this year on the first of several million square feet of new office space, restaurants, retail, and housing surrounding the station. Working collaboratively with Diridon's surrounding neighborhoods – as well as with our partners at the SAP Arena, VTA, CalTrain, and the State – we can create a memorable, vibrant, and iconic destination for our Downtown.

We also must push forward with new transit infrastructure ... to build the Light Rail connection along Capitol Expressway to Eastridge... to construct a link from Diridon Station to the Airport... and finally, to plan an innovative transit solution for West San Carlos and Stevens Creek. We won't have the money to do it all today, but we'll work with neighboring cities throughout our county, and throughout the Bay Area, to build consensus toward a regional funding strategy.

While our daily gridlock reminds us that these traffic-relief investments are long overdue, as the Chinese proverb reminds us, "the best time to plant a tree was a generation ago; the next best time is today."

And today, San Jose can shape the future through innovation, leveraging technology and fresh thinking to improve city services. We're using data analytics to improve the effectiveness of everything from combatting illegal trash dumping, to policing, to park maintenance. We've shifted more than 35 permitting processes on-line to enable us to issue 23,000 permits to business and home owners who never had to leave their chairs.

We're also transforming our city into a platform for the testing and demonstration of the most innovative technologies with civic impact, working with partners like Prospect Silicon Valley and Joint Venture: Silicon Valley. In the coming year, for example, Facebook will launch Terragraph, bringing free, gigabit-speed internet service to small businesses and visitors Downtown. We'll work with other innovators to demonstrate the future of mobility in San Jose with autonomous vehicles, and use sensor networks on our light poles to improve neighborhood safety, data access, and lighting. Share your new ideas and join our efforts, through our "Unleash Your Geek" initiative, to help us tackle urban problems. With your help, we can make San Jose America's most innovative city.

As San Jose looks to the future, however, too many of our national leaders languish in a petroleum-fueled past. As William Gibson observed, the "future is already here; it's just not evenly distributed." The future is well-distributed in San Jose, where we will set a new standard for sustainability and climate leadership.

This year, we'll build on our decade-old "Green Vision," with a new Sustainability Plan that will sharpen our focus, and broaden our reach. Rather than merely greening municipal operations or city vehicle fleets, we will engage our entire community in this effort, because sustainability is everybody's work. Join us in deciding how we'll reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create a more sustainable water supply. In March, I will urge that our Council give our residents and businesses a choice in their source of electricity, by moving forward with Community Choice Energy. Let's become the first major U.S. city to draw 100% of our electricity from renewable sources within the next decade.

Let's also challenge VTA, City Hall, and industry to ensure that an electric engine powers every bus or shuttle on San Jose's streets within that time. Let's make San Jose America's leading large city for solar deployment, even sooner. Let's create a robust trail and on-street bike system that makes two wheels a viable commuting alternative to four. Let's push our utility companies to deploy data tools to empower every resident to conserve water, and let's expand advanced water recycling systems that can provide future generations with a drought-resistant supply.

Above all, let's leave our children with a planet, and a legacy of stewardship, that makes all of us proud. Our future belongs to our children. And since they'll be choosing our nursing home, we should be nice to them. To all of our students here today: you are worthy of our investment.

You're worthy of impactful after-school learning programs, so we launched "San Jose Learns" last year in 16 schools serving our lowest-income families – and thank you Vice Mayor Magdalena Carrasco for your work launching our effort!

You're worthy of great libraries, now restored to six days of service a week, where our award-winning director, Jill Bourne, and her team host everything from coding camps to maker spaces.

You're worthy of a second chance if you fail, so we'll launch a partnership with Superintendent Jon Gundry to enable students to obtain a GED through on-line learning at our libraries.

You're worthy of a summer job, so we expanded "San Jose Works" this year to give 1,200 at-risk teens their first work experience.

You're worthy of the experience enjoyed by Independence High student Yasmin, who was inspired to follow her dreams of a career in architecture as a result of the mentoring that she received on the job from Julio Lucas.

And we'll do more. This year, we'll launch the San Jose Promise. For too many of our bright high school students, college remains too daunting a financial challenge, and only three out of every ten students complete even a two-year degree in their young lives. An overwhelming majority of our kids are relegated to a future of limited opportunity, financial struggle, and almost certain exile from their very costly hometown. With our partners, we'll push to eliminate financial barriers for struggling college students in San Jose, starting at our San Jose City, Evergreen, and West Valley community colleges. Thank you to Chancellor Deborah Budd for your vision, and to College Presidents Byron Breland and Bradley Davis, for showing us the way with your own pilot programs. While we clear obstacles for our students, and they fulfill their great promise, our community will reap a rich reward.

As we gaze towards San Jose's bright future, we do so knowing that we define that future through our actions today. Did any of you join about 30,000 of my closest friends at the Women's March last month? If so, you probably heard what I heard so often: "Ok, so we've marched. Now what do we do?"

There is a pent-up demand to take action of some kind. But what kind of action? And amid our deep divisions, how do we take action together? Can we identify shared values that transcend differences of party, or of ideology?

As Americans, we all cherish service. Consider how we honor the service of our military veterans, our first responders, or our teachers. Our lives gain meaning through our work for others – through our sacrifice for something greater than ourselves.

This is our collective call to action: to serve. Imagine how we could transform our city with a renewed culture of service – one in which we all embrace our role as stewards for our neighborhoods ... our youth ... our earth.

To propel this vision for our city, we'll launch two initiatives this year. I call the first: #ServeSJ.

Every year, hundreds of young Americorps members come from throughout the nation to participate in service year opportunities through organizations like CityYear and Our City Forest – supporting teachers in our schools, coaching our kids, and planting trees in our neighborhoods. They earn stipends, plus grants for school, and learn valuable career skills.

Let's expand those same service year opportunities, but for San Jose's own young people. Working with the Service Year Alliance, Lauder Partners, and a network of funders, we'll create hundreds of additional service year opportunities for youth in

our neighborhoods.

So too, we have the opportunity to engage many adults who have come into the twilight of their careers, looking for a way to give back. Through our partnerships with Encore and the “Generations-to-Generations” campaign, we will expand opportunities for older adults to serve, from volunteer tutoring in schools to leveraging their professional experience in City Hall fellowships. Both our youth and our retirees will make San Jose a national model of service.

What about the rest of us? As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. put it, “everybody can be great, because anybody can serve.” Allow me to offer one way we can all serve and have a transformative impact in our city: #BeautifySJ.

For too many who see the current condition of our freeways, our parks, and our neighborhoods, San Jose doesn’t have a visually appealing story to share. Trash, graffiti, and illegal dumping affect how we feel about our city. The aesthetic neglect tells visitors that they shouldn’t invest in San Jose, and more importantly, that we shouldn’t invest ourselves in our city... that our city doesn’t belong to us.

Today, we’re going to empower our community to reclaim our public spaces.

First, government must do its job. We’ve been told that CalTrans can’t clean our freeways because it can’t fill its maintenance crews. So, we’ll help CalTrans fill those vacancies with formerly jailed or homeless clients at Goodwill and the Downtown Streets Team. Thank you to Senator Jim Beall for pushing with us as CalTrans has just restored contracts for graffiti abatement, and this month, we’ll see members of the San Jose Conservation Corps helping as well.

The City will also step up. For example, in the months ahead, Kerrie Romanow and her team will expand our free residential junk pickup service, and boost enforcement of illegal dumping. Kip Harkness and Rob Lloyd will lead the launch of a new smartphone app to make it easier for residents to report and address neighborhood blight.

But fundamentally, #BeautifySJ is about unleashing the energy of our own residents to take back our city. We want to elevate the examples of Steve Holmes, who leads a fierce group of volunteers called “Team 222,” cleaning our creeks every month, and Ramona & Dario Lerma, who lead their McKinley neighborhood cleanups monthly. Our own colleague, Councilmember Tam Nguyen, leads neighborhood cleanups in his district nearly every Saturday. In this year’s budget, I’ll propose that we expand the availability of small grants to neighborhoods to spur beautification efforts: converting vacant lots to urban gardens, covering graffiti tagged walls with murals, or planting street trees. The Knight Foundation is also offering “placemaking” grants to local students to activate the neglected spaces in their neighborhoods.

We’ll beautify San Jose by engaging with you, but more importantly, you’re going to engage with each other. Volunteer efforts plant the seeds of community. A simple act of volunteerism has us meeting each other, talking about how we can organize a neighborhood watch, or help an isolated senior living nearby.

Here’s where we need your help: please take out your smartphone and go to [WWW.BEAUTIFYSJ.ORG](http://WWW.BEAUTIFYSJ.ORG) and sign up to join our campaign. We also have members of my team at the sign-in tables and representatives from many of our #BeautifySJ partners at the Resource Fair that will be starting shortly. Please join our growing team – and tweet and post about our collective efforts to #BeautifySJ. Together, let’s renew our beautiful city.

Friends, this will be our story: a story of a community uniting, to tackle our challenges, and to celebrate our successes, together. This will be our Tale of One City.

As we share our story with a troubled nation, we demonstrate the possibilities of collaboration – the power of working together to create the most successful multicultural community on the planet. I invite each of you to join me in writing the next chapter of our story.

Together, we can ignite a movement and lift our city. Together, we can inspire the next generation to join our collective work. Together, We Are San Jose.