



2017 State of the City Address – January 10, 2017
As prepared for delivery by Mayor Robert Garcia

Thank you Vice Mayor, Councilmembers and fellow elected officials for being here and for your partnership.

I also want to thank my partner Matt, my family and friends for their unconditional support.

I also want to thank every single City employee that's here tonight. From our management team to our chiefs to our employees who make our city function every single day, you make our city work. Thank you!

And a big round of applause for Musical Theater West for that beautiful rendition of *God Bless America*.

That amazing song—*God Bless America*—was written by Irving Berlin.

Irving Berlin was a Russian immigrant of Jewish decent whose family fled persecution in Russia.

He took the music he learned in the Lower East Side of Manhattan and made himself into one of America's greatest songwriters.

You probably don't know this—but Irving Berlin and I have a few things in common.

We both immigrated to this country when we were five years old.

Both of our families came to America seeking a better future.

Both of our families also arrived in the US with very little means.

But our families—like most immigrant families—found ways to succeed and overcame barriers of language and culture.

We also developed a deep love for America.

The day I became a US citizen is still the greatest day of my life.

And I will never be able to give back to my country what my country has given to my family and me.

I share the same feelings for the City of Long Beach—the place I have called home for 20 years.

I have always felt welcome and at home in our city—a place where people from all walks of life and every corner of the globe call home.

Over the last year or so, we have often asked ourselves—"What makes America great?"



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I believe what makes our country great is not fear, or divisiveness or anger—but kindness, respect, and love of country and constitution.

And let me be clear - Long Beach is, and will always remain, a city that values our differences and the diversity of our people: our hard working families, our immigrants, our seniors, our students and our veterans—we also value everyone's right to worship and love openly.

And no matter what happens elsewhere—I plan to vigorously defend our values and the civil rights of our people.

You see Long Beach is already great.

And that's why, tonight, I am proud to report—the State of our City is Strong.

It's strong because of you and because for the first time in more than 50 years, local voters invested in the future of our city.

The passage of Measure A—with more than 60% support—will invest \$387 million of new revenue into public safety and infrastructure.

It's the largest investment we've made in a generation.

Our infrastructure work begins this year.

You will see construction in every part of Long Beach.

The Council has adopted a \$150 Million Plan for the next 3 to 4 years, which will make huge investments in streets, community facilities, storm drain systems and public safety projects.

The City will invest nearly \$91 million on street repairs.

Another \$15 million has been allocated to sidewalk repair, and Long Beach's first alley improvement plan will result in \$5 million being spent to fix the city's worst alleys.

The City will spend about \$19 million for parks, including \$4 million for the Houghton Park Community Center in North Long Beach, more than \$1.7 million worth of fixes for the El Dorado Duck Pond and \$2 million for our historic Ranchos.

\$3.3 million will be invested in community facilities such as senior centers and the Animal Care Center.

Nearly \$3.7 million will be spent on improvements to our city libraries.



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And \$5 million will be invested to provide neighborhood storm protection.

We are investing \$6 million in public safety facilities including repairs to 6 fire stations the Fire Training Center, improvements to the Police Crime Lab, and the West Police Station.

Even after we implement this \$150 million plan, we still have \$50 million of Measure A revenue to allocate to public infrastructure.

But this is only a start—equally critical are the investments we are making in public safety staffing.

Measure A has already allowed the city to restore Fire Engine 8 in Belmont Shore and add officers to re-establish the South Division of the Police Department, which patrols downtown and central Long Beach.

Both of these were lost during the last recession and I'm delighted we brought them back to keep residents and visitors safe.

These restorations were the first time we increased our public safety departments in more than 10 years.

And we need to make additional restorations.

Tonight, I am asking the City Council to approve the restoration of Paramedic Rescue 12 in North Long Beach and add 9 new dedicated police officers to staff a Police Academy Unit.

Rescue 12 will bring much needed emergency services to North Long Beach and improve citywide paramedic response times.

And a dedicated academy staff means we will no longer take officers off patrol to train new recruits.

And we will improve our ability to train the best police officers!

I am also happy to let you know that last week I was elected to represent Long Beach and other area cities on the Metro Board of Directors.

One of my top priorities—along with bringing new revenues to our region—is improving safety on the Blue Line.

The Metro Board is a countywide agency that governs the Metro rail system, county bus service and investments in freeways, highways and bike infrastructure.

As you may know, the Long Beach PD does not patrol the Metro Blue Line which runs through our city.



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Currently, we have no jurisdictional power to keep the line safe.

However, in February I plan to fight to ensure the Metro Board of Directors contracts with the Long Beach PD to patrol the 8 metro stops in Long Beach.

If we can convince Metro to contract with our police department—that could add up to 30 additional officers to our department, paid for by Metro.

So—this year alone—we may have an opportunity to bring nearly 50 additional police officers to Long Beach—while also adding 2 critical fire units and hiring 18 more firefighters.

Thank you for your support of Measure A.

And thanks to Measure B—a portion of this money will be placed in reserves for tough budget times.

Before we leave the topic of Public Safety—I have one more bit of very good news to share tonight.

While many large cities across the state and country saw huge increases in violent crime last year, including murder, Long Beach actually saw a small decrease in violent crime in 2016 and—get this—an 8.3% percent decrease in homicides from 2015 to 2016.

We know there is still much to do, but we are making great progress.

We can't thank our Police Officers and Firefighters enough for all they do.

Let's give a round of applause to our police officers and firefighters.

Investing locally also drives economic development.

You can see signs of our growing economy in all parts of Long Beach—from cranes Downtown to new businesses in Douglas Park, all the way to the Uptown Renaissance.

These last two years have seen hundreds of millions of dollars in new investments flow into Downtown Long Beach.

Our new Civic Center is under construction, and we are building our new Main Library.

WeWork— one of the leading co-working office brands in the world—also arrived in downtown last year.

And new creative office spaces are opening at 3rd Street and The Promenade.



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The Pie Bar on Pine opened last year and became a huge success with their amazing pies and desserts.

In fact, their success, and other local anchors like the Kress Market, have helped spur renewed interest in North Pine as a retail and food destination.

Retail is coming to life in downtown with a great mix of unique local stores like Made by Millworks, joining national brands, like Nike, the Gap, H&M and Restoration Hardware.

And in my first State of the City, I set a goal of building 4,000 new residential units over the next 10 years, and I'm delighted to report we are making great progress toward that goal!

The Current—a new 17 story residential tower—and the new Edison lofts—have brought much-needed new units and amenities to our residential market.

3 other large residential projects broke ground last year with more to come in 2017.

More than 2,300 residential units have either been completed or have been approved for construction.

Over in East Long Beach, Douglas Park has been a huge success, transforming from an aerospace manufacturing hub to a vibrant new development.

Douglas Park is now the largest private commercial development in Long Beach and will be home to nearly 30 businesses, bringing more than 5,000 jobs to our city.

And just last week, we announced Nordstrom Rack and a Whole Foods are coming to Douglas Park.

I'm also excited that a new plan at 2nd & PCH is on track to break ground late this year.

2nd & PCH will bring new retail and dining options to our City and revitalize one of the key entrances to Long Beach.

In Bixby Knolls, SteelCraft is the first container development in Long Beach, with great local eateries and a local Brewery.

And along Atlantic Avenue in Bixby Knolls, you are witnessing a Long Beach success story.

2017 will also be a great year for development in North Long Beach and bring important improvements along Anaheim in Cambodia Town and the Zaferia District.

What you're seeing as you walk, bike and drive around Long Beach reflects overall positive trends for our local economy.



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Unemployment reached a nine-year low and we ended 2016 at 5.6%, down from 14.5% in 2009.

Minimum wage earners received a raise and we added almost 9,000 jobs to our economy this year.

We also issued nearly 900 new business permits.

It was also one the best years ever for tourism, with 6.8 million people attending Long Beach attractions, generating \$26 million for our city budget.

Many of you may not realize this—but this theater and the Convention Center are city buildings that are privately managed.

And under the leadership of Steve Goodling at the CVB and Charlie Beirne, this facility is now recognized as one of the best in the U.S.

Under their leadership the Terrace Theater and the Beverly O'Neill Theater became a true performing arts center by becoming home to key performing groups like the Long Beach Symphony, Long Beach Opera, International City Theater, Musica Angelica, Camerata Singers, the Long Beach Ballet and Musical Theater West.

Having all of these groups in the same center creates exciting programs for Southern California.

And the recently adopted 1% for the Arts will increase support for these groups and other artists and organizations throughout Long Beach.

Our Aquarium of the Pacific will break ground next month on a major expansion that will attract new visitors to our city and enhance their exhibit space.

And thanks to our Queen Mary Task Force, we now have a vision for the 43 acres of land surrounding our iconic ship.

This progress is all great.

As an urban coastal city, we are beginning to grow a strong and diversified economy.

We know there's still more to do to make it easier for businesses to open and grow here.

This is why I asked the Economic Development Commission to develop a 10-year blueprint to guide our economic future.

I am happy to report the Commission has rolled up their sleeves and spent time examining data and



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talking to local businesses and workers.

In March, they will present their Blueprint to the Council, which will guide our economic development efforts for the next decade.

To meet the ever-changing demands of the world we also must innovate.

Long Beach has been named a Top-Ten Digital City for six consecutive years.

For starters, we now have more than 300,000 of you engaging with us on social media!

You also downloaded more than 100,000 e-books and magazines from our new digital library.

And we are deploying new technology to all departments, including:

- * New software to manage the City's vehicle fleet;
- * New online construction permits
- * and the expansion of utility smart meters.

Two of my first actions as Mayor were to create the Technology and Innovation Commission and a department with the same name.

Last month, we adopted Long Beach's first Open Data Policy.

And just yesterday I unveiled DataLB—our new open data portal.

Thanks to cutting edge technology we will make our city data more accessible to the public.

Residents, entrepreneurs and nerds like me can download public data, to innovate, solve problems and create private tech solutions.

Of course, we can't talk about innovation without discussing the work of our own Long Beach Innovation Team.

Generous support from Bloomberg Philanthropies gave us the flexibility to hire a talented team that has worked to innovate economic development.

The innovation team has implemented a number of initiatives to make it easier for entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses.

A huge step was launching a new business portal—BizPort—with Code for America and with support from the Small Business Administration.



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For the first time, our city mapped out all the steps required to plan and launch a business, putting all resources in one place for prospective entrepreneurs.

We are building a city of the future, and in order to protect our city and our planet, we must be prepared to fight against climate change.

In my first State of the City address, I committed that Long Beach would develop a more comprehensive approach to climate change and resiliency.

Last year, under the leadership of Dr. Jerry Schubel from the Aquarium of the Pacific, we developed an Adaptation and Resiliency Report that outlines the likely effects of climate change on Long Beach and suggested strategies for the city to enhance resilience.

We also joined the Mayors Compact and agreed to set targets for greenhouse gas emissions and other sustainability goals.

In addition, Long Beach Transit will be one of the first large urban agencies to use a fleet of battery-electric buses this year; these zero emission vehicles are the first toward the goal of an entirely clean fleet by 2020.

The City is also significantly expanding the use of electric vehicles and just announced a plan to distribute 330 electric vehicle chargers, provided by Mercedes-Benz, to encourage residents to use electric vehicles.

I also want to applaud the Board of Harbor Commissioners for authorizing an unprecedented, \$46 million dollar mitigation program to lessen the effects of Port-related pollution.

No other U.S. seaport has committed as much funding for environmental mitigation.

I want to thank them for their leadership on this issue.

And I also look forward to supporting them as they select a new Chief Executive who will continue to support our vision for a green and clean Port.

Long Beach is also leading the way in active transportation.

In 2016, Long Beach was the only city in Southern California to be ranked in the top 10 nationally for walkability and bike-ability.

To improve our sustainability we completed 14 miles of bike lanes across the city.



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Last year, we launched the Long Beach Bike share program and users have taken 26,000 trips since the program started.

And approximately 80,000 people participated in our Beach Streets festivals.

One of our key initiatives is also replacing all city streetlights with energy efficient LED lights.

We have already replaced 9,200 streetlights and expect to replace the remaining 15,000 by October .

Our Water Department continues to lead the state in water conservation.

Total water use in 2016 was 24% percent less than the 10-year average.

We also secured \$30 million in grant funding for the design and construction of a new Municipal Urban Stormwater Treatment facility.

The City is also planting more than 6,000 trees and increasing our solar power infrastructure.

At the 2016 State of the City, I was thrilled to announce we finally reached an agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers to do a study of our breakwater with the goal of restoring our coastal ecosystem.

The study began last January and later this year, the Army Corps will have options and models for the community to review.

You have my commitment to fund efforts that will enhance our ecosystem, bring cleaner water to our shoreline, and bring more people to our beaches, while protecting our coastal homes and the Port.

In what will be one of our biggest legacies, we have begun planning for the restoration of the LA River.

We are beginning to reimagine opportunities for nature, recreation, and water reclamation.

As we look to the future, being good stewards of our earth means we must reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

This won't happen overnight, but we must reduce our city's dependence on oil.

This not only makes sense for the environment, but it also makes financial sense, because we can't continue to count on oil as a major source of revenue long-term.

Climate change is a real threat to our city and we're taking action to protect ourselves and our planet.

Today, the entire State of California is trying to address two major challenges: housing and



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homelessness.

While these challenges are related, they are different and complex.

Homeownership in California is at its lowest since the 1940s, and 1/3 of renters are paying more than 50% of their income toward rent.

The demand for housing is far greater than the supply, and the cost of land and regulations make it difficult to build new housing.

Many people don't know this, but cities are required through state housing policy to build and maintain affordable housing every year.

The truth is, we are not going to build much housing in suburban communities across East Long Beach or Uptown.

Our housing growth and opportunities are mostly in Downtown and Central Long Beach.

And every day we welcome new entrepreneurs, engineers, and high-income earners to our city.

They are buying homes and lofts, and leasing apartments.

They are attracted to the coast and the quality jobs across the region.

Our local economy is benefitting from their investments and we welcome them.

But at the same time, we need to ensure the cooks who are making our meals at our favorite Long Beach restaurants, and the workers who are caring for our seniors and cleaning our hotel rooms, continue to have the opportunity to live in our city.

They make our community vibrant, diverse and strong.

We have tried to address this challenge over the last ten years by building 1,800 new affordable units, preserving more than 2,000 existing units, and providing 340 second mortgages to low- and moderate-income first-time homebuyers.

We need to continue this work and do more.

Over the last year, the city has hosted community forums and we have assembled a housing study group to address this growing challenge.

In February, city staff will be organizing a Special City Council session to present findings from the



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report and the community.

I encourage everyone interested to get involved and remember our city should be for everyone.

California is also seeing a statewide homelessness crisis.

In Long Beach, we have made great strides with housing our homeless veterans and in fact we have housed more than 640 veterans in the last two years.

We are one of the few communities across the country, where every veteran who falls into homelessness has an opportunity to be placed into a home.

But there's so much more to do.

First, we are building a new sheltered gathering place for those experiencing homelessness next door to our Multi-Service Center in West Long Beach.

This will create a safe place to rest during the day, after shelters close.

As you know, we have had a winter shelter in the city for years.

But a shelter open only in the winter, is not enough.

It's time for Long Beach to operate its own year-round shelter.

All the research shows immediate shelter is the first step to permanent housing.

Now, I want to say few words about what holds the key to our future—education.

Long Beach has one of the best public education systems in the country.

Our local university, ranks number 5 nationally in applications!

More than 91,000 applied to CSULB this fall.

The Former Long Beach City College President just became Chancellor of the California Community Colleges.

And we have one of the best school districts anywhere—winner of the Broad Prize for Urban Education and recognized as one of the Top 5 systems in the world.

Alone—these institutions are great, together they are amazing.



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They created the Long Beach College Promise—which helped inspire the America's College Promise and communities across the country.

In the last 2 years, we have increased internship spots from 1,500 to more than 3,800.

And we have added more than 900 public pre-school seats.

Last week, we launched the Mayor's Fund for Education, to ensure every family has access to a quality preschool and early childhood education.

I want to thank our local education leaders, our school board members, our college trustees, and our classroom teachers for all they do for our city.

To close tonight, I want to introduce you to one of our residents—Gus Orozco.

Gus immigrated to the U.S from Mexico when he was two years old.

He went to Long Beach Schools and graduated from Wilson High School.

He then chose to serve our country, joined the Army, and was deployed to Iraq.

He continues to serve in the reserves, and since coming home, he graduated from Long Beach City College and is currently studying environmental science at CSULB.

And, I'm proud to tell you he also became an American Citizen.

Gus represents the best of our nation—an immigrant living the American Dream, in a nation built by immigrants.

He is making our community better every single day.

Gus is here tonight—please join me in thanking him for all he has done for our country.

We are in this journey together, let's support each other, help our neighbors, help the poor in our community, and lead with caring hearts and optimism about our future.

I know together we will build an even better Long Beach.

We are America's greatest city and I couldn't be prouder to be your Mayor.

Good night.



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God Bless America!

And God Bless Long Beach!