Good afternoon! Sorry I’m late, but I hope everyone enjoyed the video depicting a fairly typical day in the life of the Mayor. And that was actually one of my slower days…

This video was a creative endeavor from our amazing [GGTV3](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/commserv/ggtv3), as are several of the videos you’ll see today. Besides our very talented Garden Grove City Council, you may have noticed cameo appearances from several VIP’s including Congressman Lou Correa; OC Mayors Tom Tait, Miguel Pulido, Al Murray, and Barbara Delgleize; former NFL Quarterback Todd Marinovich; and Rockstar Bradley Mayo, aka: Knowmadik. Thanks to everyone who participated for their valuable time and good sense of humor!

I’d like to thank the [Garden Grove Chamber of Commerce](http://www.gardengrovechamber.com/) for hosting this event to deliver my State of the City address to all of you here today.

I’d also like to acknowledge my family members joining me, including my beautiful wife, Manivone, my two amazing soccer stars, Jaden and Ashton, my mom “Pumma,” my sister Linda, and a number of my wife’s relatives. Please stand for just one moment to be recognized.

Public service is a very time-consuming role and I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to pursue this passion in my life.

Garden Grove is a city of hope and new beginnings. Our citywide rebranding campaign is in full stride and big things are happening all around town. After several hugely successful Open Streets events, numerous public art installations, and the two-day High & Mighty Music Festival, it’s becoming evident, from the outside looking in, that we are fully committed to creating a more vibrant future for this city than anything you’ve ever experienced in the past.

Garden Grove is YOUR market and the City is here to help guide you along, cut through red tape, streamline processes, and facilitate any fresh new ideas you may have. We are enthusiastic about making Garden Grove a better place to live, work, AND play in the years to come.

Our transition to district representation is going great. I would like to acknowledge each of my City Council colleagues and thank them for their hard work and compassion for public service. The foundation has been poured and now, together, we are framing a beautiful new structure for how the city will operate going forward. District representation has given us the opportunity to refocus on how to properly allocate limited resources across the city and, as a direct result, we are just beginning to celebrate all the unique and special parts of town that were previously bundled together in a single outlook.

For example, we are embarking upon an effort to enhance the Valley View corridor in west Garden Grove, where a tightly knit community of proud residents are hungry for new dining and retail experiences. Little Saigon continues to thrive and expand, as it transitions into becoming a cultural tourism hub. The [Grove Resort District](http://grovedistrictanaheimresort.com/) is plowing full speed ahead, capitalizing on the positive externalities afforded by our adjacency to Disneyland and its 27-million annual visitors. Central Garden Grove has managed to preserve a glimpse of our agricultural roots, with a sprinkling of mansion-like, multigenerational housing units being constructed as evidence to the continuing prosperity of our residents. On the eastside, our spirited Hispanic community adds some flavor and spice. And, Downtown Garden Grove is on the cusp of a major rebirth, with largescale community events, pop-ups, and parklets paving the way for the soon-to-emerge brick-and-mortar projects such as Cottage Industries and Steelcraft to take shape.

At this time, I would like to take a moment to personally introduce your City Council leadership team. If I can ask them to remain standing after I read their names and for the audience to please hold your applause until all the names are read. Starting with [Mayor Pro Tem Kris Beard](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/citymanager/CityCouncil/mayor-pro-tem-kris-beard) from District 1; [Councilmember John O’Neill](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/citymanager/CityCouncil/council-member-john-r-oneill) from District 2; [Councilmember Thu Ha Nguyen](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/citymanager/CityCouncil/council-member-thu-ha-nguyen)from District 3; [Councilmember Patrick Phat Bui](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/citymanager/CityCouncil/council-member-patrick-phat-bui) from District 4; [Councilmember Stephanie Klopfenstein](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/citymanager/CityCouncil/council-member-stephanie-klopfenstein) from District 5; and last but most certainly not least, [Councilmember Kim Nguyen](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/citymanager/CityCouncil/council-member-kim-b-nguyen)from District 6.

I would also like to acknowledge our City Management team, including [City Manager Scott Stiles](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/citymanager/ScottStiles); Finance Director Kingsley Okereke; Economic and Community Development Director Extraordinaire Lisa Kim; the newly appointed Community Services Director John Montanchez; Public Works Director Bill Murray; IT Director Charles Kalil; and Human Resources Director Laura Stover.

Despite restrictive budgets, financial challenges, and frugality that keeps us doing more with less, our department directors work diligently with their respective staffs to obtain amazing results you’ll hear about today. Public Safety is the truest example of this, so I’d like to start out by highlighting our police and fire departments for their vital and heroic service to our community.

Last year, the [Fire Department](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/fire) heeded our calls for help— 15,000 of them to be exact— maintaining quick 9-1-1 emergency response times, crucial in life and death situations. In addition, they provided essential aid to help combat California’s devastating wildfires, and most recently, the fatal Santa Barbara County mudslides.

The [Police Department](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/police) has been heightened with a number of top personnel proudly joining the force to help keep up with the growing demand for police services. Despite the detrimental consequences on crime rates plaguing Garden Grove and most California cities as a result of the early release program, the Garden Grove Police Department continues to work successfully within the community to prevent crime.

Garden Grove residents have always been proud and supportive of their City’s public safety departments because we provide high quality services. That’s evident by the feedback we received from a recent [community survey](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/garden-grove-residents-satisfied-with-quality-of-life) that showed nearly 90% of our residents believed that both the fire and police departments were doing excellent work. Public Safety is the most fundamental service a City provides, and we are grateful that our residents clearly see the work ethic, dedication, and talent that comes from our Garden Grove Fire and Police Departments. Please join me in giving Fire Chief Tom Schultz and Police Chief Todd Elgin a huge round of applause on behalf of their brilliant public safety teams.

The challenge is to continue providing the level of quality service our residents expect and deserve. With Sacramento’s ongoing money-grabs and the state’s decision to release prisoners, it is increasingly difficult to support their mission with the resources at hand.

Rest assured that the Garden Grove City Council is committed to keeping our fire stations open, protecting local neighborhood police patrols, and keeping the bad element out of Garden Grove.

In recent years, we have come to realize and embrace that the secret sauce in our recipe for high productivity as a public agency stems from having shared vision and establishing an organizational culture which is rooted in strong, healthy, and cohesive interdepartmental relationships and collaboration. Although we still have plenty of room for improvement, I would say we are currently leading the charge and setting an example that public agencies all around us are taking note of, with envy.

In a place like Orange County, California, which has a vibrant economy larger than most states, and even many countries around the world, it’s hard to set yourself apart as a city and establish a meaningful sense of identity. This is what we refer to as “Placemaking” and we are squarely focused on dissecting and defining the intricacies of our own unique “brand” here in Garden Grove. We have taken inventory of the many fascinating aspects of our historical roots from the agricultural era and we aim to preserve the nostalgia of our small-town-feel. We have weathered rapid population growth and we are facing the challenges of our future projections with open eyes.

Garden Grove enjoyed a golden heyday upon its inception 60-plus years ago and then went through a period of stagnation, as newer cities around the county learned from our mistakes and did an arguably better job of master planning. So, we are now presented with an opportunity to reposition ourselves by unlearning conventional ways of thinking and taking a different approach at overlaying new forms of mass transit, implementing a system of bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, encouraging the use of ride sharing networks, becoming more conscientious about minimizing our environmental footprint, and reconsidering the value of parking spaces in a universe that is rapidly progressing towards driverless vehicles, online retail sales, and drone deliveries within the not-too-distant future.

As a symbolic gesture to this brave new world, I will be proposing this year that we change our City colors from blue to green, and have a little fun engaging the community in a challenge to design a new City logo. So, stay tuned!

Throughout 2018, we will be marking the one year countdown to the 5th year anniversary of our “Re:Imagine Garden Grove” campaign, which effectively began with our very first Open Streets event held in 2014. We hired Aaron Paley, the Founder and Executive Director of CicLAvia to help us plan that event and we unveiled the Todd Marinovich “Roots” mural on the side of the historic Gem Theater. We subsequently hosted two other similar events, most recently on April Fool’s Day of last year, with over 15,000 people in attendance. Vans and The Anaheim Ducks were generous sponsors of that event and we hope to foster an ongoing relationship with them in our future endeavors. We’ve learned a lot from hosting 3 successful [Open Streets](http://ggopenstreets.com/)events and we are getting better and better at maximizing the attendance while minimizing the negative impacts. Throughout this year, we plan to host a series of smaller re:imagine-themed community events while we plan out the next big one coming in 2019.

As a direct result of our placemaking efforts, green shoots are now starting to emerge from the ground. Main Street is beginning to see new life from new arrivals, such as [Barcode](http://barcodegardengrove.business.site/), [Mr. Matcha](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.gomrmatcha.com/), [All About the Bride](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.facebook.com/allaboutthebridecouture/), [E-Patisserie](http://epatisseriecafe.com/), and [102 Café](http://102cafe.com/).

Down the street is [Gem Theater](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.jamboreehousing.com/affordable-housing-communities/properties-list/wesley-village?vwr-type=partnerâ>Wesley Village</a>, a unique adaptive reuse of church property transformed into modern affordable housing with expanded educational, social, and health services for families and seniors. </p><p>The <a href=) continues to produce top-notch performances, with One More Productions’ Executive Director, Nicole Cassesso, being recently named as The LA Times Woman of The Year in Theater. And next door, [Shakespeare OC](http://shakespeareoc.org/) has been putting on high-caliber plays at the Amphitheatre for many years.

Our first annual Holiday Toy Drive, sponsored by [Purist Group](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://puristgroup.com/), who brought out their breathtaking collection of privately-owned exotic vehicles, was produced by a handful of local philanthropists including: Jayce Yenson from Saigon City Market, Tam Nguyen from [Advance Beauty College](http://advancebeautycollege.com/), Gary Nguyen from [24/7 Healthcare](http://247cah.com/), David Truong from [Mimi’s Jewelry](http://www.mimisjewelryinc.com/), and Sonny Nguyen from [7 Leaves Cafe](http://7leavescafe.com/). This event took Main Street by storm back in December and collected over 1,500 toys for needy families during the holiday season.

A group called LFA, which stands for Large Format Assembly, commandeered the underutilized [Garden Amphitheater](http://gardenamphitheatre.com/) and has been producing various shows, including the Vans Warped Tour Battle of The Bands. Last August, LFA produced the single coolest two-day music festival, [High & Mighty Festival](http://highandmightyfest.com/), this city has ever seen, headlined by The Dirty Heads and Sublime with Rome, in the Village Green.

Let’s give it up for Jon, Viet, Angel and Beto from LFA!

Shaheen Sadeghi, the most sought-after retail developer in Orange County, has been busy meeting regularly with our Planning folks to expedite the opening of [Cottage Industries](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/city-files/cottage-industry-lab-low.pdf). His company, Lab Holdings, will be repurposing a number of early 1900’s Craftsman homes into commercial businesses and eateries strewn throughout the mixed-use residential neighborhood east of City Hall. He once told me this is going to be the coolest project he’s ever done, and that gave me goosebumps! Shaheen exudes a grandiose aura of coolness, which triggers a multiplier effect of other entrepreneurs groveling to snatch up vacant spaces around wherever he plants his flag. We are blessed that Shaheen took notice of our downtown’s potential and I can’t wait to see what he has in store for Garden Grove. Thank you, Chris Bennett and Roman Ciuni from LAB Holdings for being here today!

On Euclid Street, adjacent to City Hall, Martin Howard and Kim Gros are preparing to pull permits for the development of [Steelcraft Garden Grove](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.steelcraftlb.com/2018/02/mayor-announces-garden-grove-tenants/), an outdoor urban eatery with artisan retail built from recycled shipping containers, stacked two high, with some containers placed on end just to add an architectural element.

On March 5, the City and Steelcraft will officially break ground for this eagerly-awaited project coming into the downtown area.

I’m ecstatic to have the privilege of announcing several of the new Steelcraft tenants, which have been kept tightly under wraps until now!

They are:  
[Beachwood Brewing](http://beachwoodbbq.com/brewery.html): Craft beer from Long Beach;  
[Dark Horse Coffee Roasters](http://www.darkhorsecoffeeroasters.com/): A San Diego favorite;  
[The Nest: Breakfast ALL DAY](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://eatnest.com/);  
[The Chick ‘N Shack](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.shakeshack.com/products/chickn-shack/): Southeast Asian chicken-and-rice comfort food;  
[Renegade Taco](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/city-files/Renegade-Taco.png): Craft fusion tacos;  
[Urban Pie](http://www.eatuppizza.com/the-pizza#modal): Wood-burning pizza and Italian food;  
[Cauldron Ice Cream](http://www.cauldronicecream.com/): Liquid-nitrogen ice cream made to order; and  
[Honey & Butter](http://www.honeynbutter.com/): Famous for their creature cookies;

Thank you, Martin and Kim, and the Steelcraft team, for being here today!

The Carpenters Union was gracious enough to design and build two oversized Adirondack chairs as a permanent public art installation at Civic Center Park. Since their completion last April, thousands of people have come out to take pictures climbing on these colorful 10-foot tall monuments. I hope to stay in the good graces of the Carpenters Union so that we can lean on them for assistance in building more throughout our expanded downtown. From 9th Street all the way over to Nutwood, I can envision a colorful collection of Adirondack chairs, both large and small, lining the area as a proper demarcation of our newly re:imagined downtown.

Civic Center Park may look tired and overrun with ducks, but it has lots of future potential. It spans the area between City Hall and the Garden Grove Main Library. The library is dated, too, as the advent of technology has shifted the way many people read and do research these days. But, it is nonetheless still a great public gathering place. I hope the County will be open-minded about entertaining the concept of re-orienting the library to face inward, so that we can improve Civic Center Park with retail kiosks, a water feature, and possibly even host night markets there at some point with the help of LFA.

As our downtown area begins to flourish, it would be fun to facilitate some incubator retail spots on Acacia, between Euclid and Main Street, or perhaps even along certain segments of the old Pacific Electric Right of Way. This innovative idea that came from our Planning Division would make it easier for budding entrepreneurs to try out new concepts for a limited time-period, with minimal red tape and then, for the start-ups that manage to gain consumer acceptance, our Economic Development Team could usher them into more permanent locations.

Our [Economic Development team](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/econdev), led by Lisa Kim, Greg Blodgett, Monica Covarrubias, and Grace Lee is a force to be reckoned with. Lisa Kim is a visionary leader who always looks for the food…oops, I meant she always looks for the “good” in every situation. Thanks, Lisa!

Every day, plus countless evenings and weekends, our Econ Dev team is hard at work beating the drum and getting businesses to come take a fresh new look at Garden Grove. Within the past few years, there have been a number of new business openings and expansions. We have broken ground, cut ribbons, and welcomed in new arrivals such as: [West Grove Fitness](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.westgrovefitness.com/), [Chuze Fitness](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://chuzefitness.com/), [Gold’s Gym](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.goldsgym.com/), [UFC Gym](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://ufcgym.com/gardengrove), [Smart & Final](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://locations.smartandfinal.com/ca/garden-grove/788/), [Aldi Market](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.aldi.us/en/weekly-specials/our-weekly-ads/), [Kumon Learning Center](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.kumon.com/) and [Bruster’s Ice Cream](http://brusters.com/). We have seen major renovations and expansions of existing businesses, including [Hometown Buffet](http://locations.buffet.com/ca/garden-grove/0704/?utm_source=Google&utm_medium=Maps&utm_campaign=Google Places) and [McDonalds](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.mcdonalds.com/us/en-us.html?cid=RF:YXT_FM:TP::Yext:Referral).

One of our largest manufacturers, [Saint Gobain Performance Plastics](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.plastics.saint-gobain.com/)’ addition of a new automotive business unit will nearly triple their $200 million annual revenue and add about 60 new jobs to the city.

Also in the works is [Nova Restaurant](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/city-files/Nova-Restaurant.png), which is slated to open in the Grove District, next to the Hyatt Regency Orange County, later this year.

Over on the West end, in Mayor Pro Tem Kris Beard’s District 1, preliminary plans will be submitted this spring to enlarge and enhance [Valley View 4-Star Cinema](http://starlightcinemas.com/location/444/Starlight-4-Star-Cinemas-Showtimes) and add up to two new restaurant pads.

Our hotel developments continue to lead the charge as the economic engine that fuels the city. As of last year, hotel tax became our single largest source of revenue, exceeding sales tax.

For the last two fiscal years, Transient Occupancy Tax has increased by 20%, totaling $25 million, which represents nearly 1/4 of the top-line revenue coming into our General Fund.

The [Great Wolf Lodge Southern California](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.greatwolf.com/southern-california) has really put Garden Grove on the map as a destination location, and they are blowing the doors off our initial forecasts and on target to generate over $6 million to the City’s coffers in their first full year of operation. At peak season, Great Wolf Lodge employs nearly 750 people, many of whom are Garden Grove residents.

South of the 22 Freeway, in Council member Kim Nguyen’s District 6, the BN Group has closed escrow on a profitable sale of City-owned land with plans to build a 124-room [Home2 Hilton Suites](http://home2suites3.hilton.com/en/index.html). Ground breaking for this hotel is anticipated for Fall 2018.

Plans are also in the works for Kam Sang, Inc., to construct a [Nickelodeon-themed waterpark hotel](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/city-files/Nickelodeon-Themed-Water-Park-Hotel.png) adjacent to the Sheraton.

Earlier this month, the hotel industry announced the sale of the Wyndham hotel to OC-based Khanna Enterprises, who plans to reflag the 376-room hotel as a Delta by Marriott.

Investel has become a new powerhouse in town, with plans to renovate the Hyatt Regency. Investel also recently took control of the 4.3-acre site, adjacent to the Target store on Harbor Boulevard, with plans to construct the largest development project the City has ever seen with an investment of approximately $400 million. This exciting mixed-use endeavor, described as a “high-lifestyle resort project,” is expected to begin construction during the second half of 2018. It will consist of three new hotel towers totaling 769 rooms, nearly 40,000 square-feet of meeting space, and 36,000 square-feet of retail and commercial uses. At this time, I am elated to unveil the names of the first two hotel flags that have been secured as part of this amazing new project!

The first tower will be a Le Meridien Hotel by Marriott. Paris-borne Le Meridien offers 100 locations worldwide with expansion into Asia-Pacific and the Americas. The new Grove District hotel will offer approximately 400-rooms, a rooftop bar, two restaurants, and 30,000 square-feet of conference space.

The second tower will be a Kimpton Hotel. The San Francisco-based brand that introduced the boutique hotel concept in America, operates more than 60 hotels in resort destinations across the US, Europe, and the Caribbean. The [Garden Grove Kimpton](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.kimptonhotels.com/blog/sun-kissed-california-kimpton-comes-garden-grove/) will offer 200 rooms, a rooftop bar, a restaurant, and 10,000 square-feet of conference space.

The combined development will share an approximately 1,200-space parking structure, a spa, multiple pools, and an entertainment deck geared to rival those found in Las Vegas.

In addition to making things happen all over town, our Office of Economic Development is also accumulating a stockpile of awards and recognitions along the way. One notable is their recent [win at the Orange County Business Council’s Turning Red Tape into Red Carpet awards](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/econdev/achievements-in-business), where they were the winners for Responding to Globalization and Real Estate Redevelopment and Reuse. Congratulations guys!

With an average single-family home price of around $550,000, as compared to the countywide median price of $690,000, Garden Grove continues to provide an exceptional value for new homeowners, as well as renters and commercial businesses in one of the most desired regions of the country.

Shea Homes is beginning construction on 70 new single-family detached homes at the intersection of Lewis Street and Garden Grove Boulevard. All homes will offer attached 2-car garages and private outdoor areas. Plans are expected to be submitted in April.

[Far West Industries](http://www.farwestindustries.com/) will be constructing 16 new townhomes that include two live-work units along Garden Grove Boulevard, just east of Euclid Street and there are several other exciting new live-work projects slated within the Civic Center core. As this area begins to intensify with more foot traffic, live-work units will become a great new option for small business owners who wish to live right above their own shops.

As we know, Orange County is an extremely expensive place to live and there is a huge need for more affordable housing. As a city that is so actively engaged in redevelopment, it is incumbent upon us to be good stewards in addressing our city’s affordable housing needs. We aspire to become the poster child of how local agencies ought to behave by being proactive in looking for both new construction and rehab opportunities to provide affordable housing options for our low-income residents.

Sycamore Court, on Bolsa Avenue, was a dilapidated old apartment complex that is now deep in the process of total renovation to become an affordable housing acquisition-and-rehab project.

Kam Sang is about to commence leasing activities for the first phase of its [Brookhurst Place](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/brookhurstplace) mixed-use project, where nearly 180 rental apartment units are nearing completion. Phase two will offer over 300 for-sale condominium units, of which 60 will be price-restricted as affordable housing units to covenant. Phase 3 will consist of approximately 200,000 square-feet of commercial and retail space, 200 additional residential units, and possibly even a 120-key hotel.

The most common question I get asked on a regular basis is, “Hey, what’s going on with that big rusty skeleton near Brookhurst and Garden Grove Boulevard?” Finally, after many years and countless legal battles, I am thrilled to make a formal announcement that a new project is about to move forward.

The grey clouds have disseminated, the agreements have been inked, and plans are being expedited through the planning process to complete construction of the existing structure, yielding approximately 400 new affordable apartment units for seniors, plus approximately 12,000 square-feet of retail/commercial space allocated on the ground floor. I want to thank the members of the Hoag Foundation Board, Alexis Gevorgian of AMG & Associates, Jeremy Harris, and countless others for their tireless efforts in coming together to get this project back on track and moving forward.

So, we’ve arrived at the place where the rubber meets the road: our financial overview. My enthusiasm and excitement for all the wonderful things happening in our city, many of which strongly support our City’s economic health, are founded in absolute facts. Not only do our TOT and sales revenues continue to rise, our projected property revenues are expected to show a 5.8% increase. But as I mentioned earlier, when you factor in the weighted challenges of providing the level of services nearly 180,000 residents have come to expect from a city that has always prided itself on doing more with less, you tend to sweat a little bit.

Like every city in the state, we have our challenges: aging infrastructure, Sacramento’s multi-million-dollar money-grabs, homelessness, our growing responsibility towards public employee pension funds, and the enduring consequences from the abolishment of redevelopment.

The City continues to contend with a nagging structural deficit. And, with increasing employer-required contributions to the PERS system, the deficit is likely to increase over the coming years.

As we continue our City’s tradition of fiscal self-reliance and efficiency, we are always actively looking at ways of keeping our resident’s hard-earned tax dollars to benefit local services. As we’ve seen time and time again, whenever Sacramento has a budget crisis, they burden cities to solve it. Over the last 7 years, Sacramento has taken millions of dollars in local tax money that would otherwise support our local Police and Fire Departments, fix our infrastructure, and contribute towards preserving our high quality-of-life.

Our strategy, as the Garden Grove City Council, is to take out our magnifying glasses and implement our next two-year budget by finding ways to stay even leaner, such as implementing a 5% cut in City budgets. We remain committed to economic development as a means to increase revenue while keeping our costs contained. We’ve had a strong history of community support as a full-service city that gives us the confidence of knowing we’re doing things right, and we’ll continue to stay on that safe path.

When we talk about countywide challenges, homelessness comes to the forefront. According to the [2017 Cost of Homelessness Report](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.unitedwayoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/united-way-cost-study-homelessness-2017-report.pdf), compiled by United Way and several partner agencies, the cost to address homeless issues in Orange County was a staggering $299-million a year, with municipalities bearing the brunt of these costs.

Our Police Department has been proactively dealing with homeless issues, forming the Special Resources Team two years ago, dedicated exclusively to this cause. The team goes beyond traditional law enforcement by building trusted relationships with the homeless and beneficial partnerships with other agencies, service providers, and surrounding cities. The result has been a reduction in homelessness in key problem areas of the city and less homeless calls for frontline officers. This year, the [SRT was honored with a Golden Hub of Innovation Award](http://behindthebadgeoc.com/cities/ggpd/garden-grove-pds-special-resources-team-receives-golden-hub-award-innovation), presented by the Association of California Cities, Orange County.

The award recognizes public-sector initiatives that improve productivity and efficiency, and spur transformational ideas that can become best practices for other cities. I don’t know if Master Officer Brian Hatfield is here today, but I’d like to acknowledge his crucial involvement in making all of this happen.

Staying on the public safety topic, our Police Department headquarters recently gave up its 1970’s retro look for modern enhancements to their lobby, dispatch, and records areas. No Police Department would be complete without bulletproof glass, updated surveillance and camera equipment, and customer service computer kiosks to streamline the information process.

Also, our new [Fire Station 6](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/fire/station-6-groundbreaking) and accompanying park improvements continue on track, a nice compliment to District 5 Councilmember, Stephanie Klopfenstein!

Moving on to operational efficiency, new systems are being integrated into key ways we do business.

One is the acquisition of an Enterprise Resource Planning software system to replace the City’s dated financial software program. It will be the largest software implementation the City has ever embarked upon and will fundamentally transform how the City manages its financial, budgetary, human resources, procurement, and other administrative business processes to streamline functions and enhance transparency.

Also, in keeping with the growing demands of technology, our latest website re-design is in the works. The new site will be built with an open government mindset and incorporate suggestions from local focus groups. Searchability will be vastly improved along with maintaining full ADA compliance.

Coming in to City Hall used to be a requirement to start any construction project. Now, through the magic of technology, much of the process can be done online, thanks to major enhancements to our Building Services website. Just have a look:

Please give our Chief Building Official, David Dent, a big round of applause for all his hard work and efforts.

As if building permits weren’t sexy enough, let’s talk about infrastructure!

Garden Grove is determined to stay on course to maintain the integrity of its critical infrastructure and, at the same time, proactively plan for what lies ahead. This involves factoring in our increasing and changing population and mapping out how to address future impacts to our basic services, such as: roadways, water quality, emergency preparedness, and sustainability.

Protecting our local investment means keeping our community drinking water supplies clean and improving our delivery systems in the event of disasters or emergencies. It means prioritizing project spending on those that address the city’s economic, environmental, and social goals.

This year, our [Public Works Department](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/pw) undertook several street, sewer, and traffic projects, including the Magnolia Street reconstruction and the Westminster Avenue rehabilitation. Both of these projects use full-depth reclamation, a process that uses recycled roadway and prolongs the life of the pavement while reducing maintenance costs.

The traffic light synchronization project, nearly complete, will make commuters traveling along 3 main Garden Grove arterials—Harbor, Chapman, and Westminster—save time while improving the traffic flow.

Other projects coming to fruition this year will be our highly-anticipated bike and pedestrian trail along the OCTA right of way; needed storm drain improvements; new turn lanes; and Safe Routes to School street improvements.

Earlier, I referred to the findings of a community survey that was recently conducted in Garden Grove. The results showed that two-thirds of our residents want to maintain the high-quality-of-life they have come to expect.

Quality-of-life is all around us in Garden Grove, from our schools and parks to community celebrations and programs.

Our [Garden Grove Unified School District](http://www.ggusd.us/) continues to excel in their state performance averages, again exceeding at all grade levels in Math and English. The incorporation of their Vietnamese and Spanish Dual Immersion programs have brought the district newfound distinction and success. This year we saw the completion of several school renovation projects, including the dedication of a brand new athletic stadium to Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, Michael A. Monsoor. Superintendent Gabriella Mafi, and members of the GGUSD Board of Education here today, please stand to be recognized.

Over on the Westside, Eastgate Park now boasts a new walking trail around the perimeter of the park made from decomposed granite. Complementing the pedestrian trail is new playground equipment and LED lighting on the basketball courts.

Garden Grove’s dog park, the “Barking Lot,” underwent improvements to public benches, drinking fountains and dog waste enclosures, as well as new fencing and turf renovation.

The Community Services Department has been diligently working on the Parks, Recreation and Facilities Master Plan which will set the framework for future decisions relating to the planning, maintenance, development and/or rehabilitation of Garden Grove’s parks and recreational facilities.

In all City publications, website and social media; local and regional newspapers; on banners throughout the City, and in your program here today, you’ll see the words and images for “[Garden Grove is Your Market](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I14B8JsICAQ).” Our City’s image campaign continues highlighting the best our community has to offer. From food and recreation, to business investments and education, our city provides the best market to live, work, play, go to school, invest, or just visit as a tourist.

The City’s Neighborhood Improvement Committee hosted another event on Palma Vista Avenue last May that included planting new trees and painting a colorful mural on a five-foot high cinderblock wall, often sullied by gang-themed graffiti. Kudos to District 2 Council member John O’Neill for rolling up his sleeves and contributing to further beautifying the Palma Vista neighborhood. Also, thank you to artists Kurtis Gibson and Michael Davis for volunteering their time to create a beautiful piece of permanent public art.

Colorful celebrations took place last September in Little Saigon for two prominent figures in Vietnamese history. First, the dedication of new street signs on Bolsa Avenue for Vietnam’s former King and General from the 13th century Tran dynasty, Tran Hung Dao. And, a street-renaming and statue unveiling for Emperor Quang Trung at the Business Center Parkway off of Euclid. Thank you to Councilmembers Phat Bui and Thu-Ha Nguyen for championing significant community milestones.

I’ve shared a number of big announcements with you today and I hope this message inspires you to join the contagion and play an active role in shaping the future of Garden Grove. From Shaheen Sadeghi’s Cottage Industries project to Martin Howard’s Steelcraft; from Le Meridian to Kimpton hotels; from Open Streets events to High & Mighty Music festivals; and from the Shea Homes project to completion of the Rusty Skeleton, a lot of great things are moving and shaking in Garden Grove these days!

But our most exciting, most outrageous endeavor in store for 2018, is pursuing development opportunities for the 100-acre Willowick Golf Course site, which is owned by the City of Garden Grove and located in the City of Santa Ana.

After taking time to have one-on-one meetings with each and every Councilmember from both cities, I brought forth a Memorandum of Understanding that was unanimously approved by both cities late last year. I urged City Management and legal counsel to resist the temptation to make that MOU a lengthy document. I just wanted for the two cities to simply agree to consider it and then subsequently bring all the city leaders and community stakeholders together in an OPEN forum to discuss the process and next steps for pursuing this golden opportunity.

In a nutshell, the MOU simply states that both Santa Ana and Garden Grove desire to jointly explore future development opportunities for the Willowick property. The [OC Streetcar](http://www.octa.net/Projects-and-Programs/All-Projects/Rail-Projects/OC-Streetcar/) project is rolling full steam ahead, with plans to pass right through this site, so Willowick is uniquely positioned for a large project with regional significance. We are going to take things one step at a time and progress towards hiring a neutral third-party facilitator to help create shared vision among the two cities. We’ll then proceed to implement a formal marketing effort far and wide, so that developers can come forward and share their ideas about what this unique property may want to be when it grows up. Ultimately, the goal is to craft a development plan and deal structure that is mutually beneficial to BOTH cities. If we are able to set politics aside and keep our eyes on the prize, redevelopment of the Willowick Golf Course will become the single biggest financial windfall for BOTH cities.

Furthermore, the process will be a once in a lifetime chance to show what collaborative governmental agencies, including Garden Grove, [Santa Ana](http://www.ci.santa-ana.ca.us/), [OCTA](http://www.octa.net/), and [The County of Orange](https://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/state-of-the-city-2018https://www.ocgov.com/) are capable of accomplishing by putting all of our great minds together.

Since the number one priority of this City Council is driving top line revenue growth to balance the budget, our primary focus is on economic development. In order to make Garden Grove an even more desirable place to live, work, and play, all city departments are working together very hard to Re:Imagine Garden Grove and better define its sense of “place” within the county.

I want to express my heartfelt admiration for our own GGTV3 crew, who besides producing all of the City’s outstanding videos, has won numerous awards for public broadcasting, including the coveted Emmy award. I know they’re both tied up right now, but let’s give Marie Moran and Jeff Davis a big round of applause!

Here’s another great sample of their work to close our program.

I’d like to call Cindy back up to the podium to close our program.

Thank you all for attending and enjoy the rest of your day!