SPEECH: **State of the City Address**
SPEAKER: **Mayor Tom Chavez**
TITLE: **Partnerships**
DATE: **February 23, 2016**

Good Evening,

I am Mayor Tom Chavez and, on behalf of Temple City and the City Council, I have the honor of delivering the 2016 State of the City Address. The Council and I wish to inform residents and business leaders of what we are doing to maintain our quality of life and build Temple City into the strong regional partner that we know a prosperous future requires. This is a wonderful opportunity to evaluate where we've been and get the community involved in where we're going.

I want to start by introducing my hard-working Council colleagues: Mayor Pro Tem Vincent Yu, Councilmember Nanette Fish, Councilmember William Man and Councilmember Cynthia Sternquist.

Next, I want to recognize our City Manager, Bryan Cook. Bryan has done a wonderful job since coming to Temple City and I am grateful for his leadership.

Also deserving of thanks are:

- Pastor Jim Walden, for allowing us the use of this lovely facility.
- Jerry Jambazian, the historian behind Templecityphotos.com, who provided us some of the photos you'll be seeing.
- Community Media of the Foothills, for its audiovisual production work.
- And, finally, I offer my deepest gratitude to our hard-working city staffers. Without them, none of Temple City's accomplishments would've been possible.

Compared to previous years in the proud history of Temple City, 2015 was rather quiet. But that doesn't mean nothing happened in City Hall.

First and foremost, we maintained our well-deserved reputation as a safe place to live and work. The experts at Safewise.com yet again had Temple City on its list of the top 50 safest municipalities in California. That's a wonderful testament to our law-enforcement officials, as well as Temple City's eyes on the streets: our Neighborhood Watch Program. In 2015, alert residents prevented a number of burglaries, resulting in arrests. Interest in the Neighborhood Watch is high, with each meeting in our 10 watch areas drawing an average of 85-90 residents. That commitment to upholding Temple City's safety and quality of life is greatly appreciated by the Council. If any captains of our Neighborhood Watch are in attendance, please stand so we may recognize and thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

In other public safety accomplishments, we completed the relocation and outfitting of our Emergency Operations Center. Now we have a dedicated space where we can coordinate Temple City's emergency planning, training, response and recovery efforts, rather than a makeshift set-up in a multipurpose room. And we readied for El Nino. Catch basins and culverts continue to be inspected and cleared of debris. We've held meetings with our partner response agencies, such as the fire department, sheriff's department and the Red Cross. Residents have received informational flyers, giving tips on how to prepare for torrential rain and what to do if and when the storms arrive. Members of CERT have prefilled sandbags. We all pray none of these forward-looking preparations will be needed – but if they are, Temple City is ready.

Along with boasting of our safe streets, I am just as pleased to brag about Temple City's sound balance sheet. Making sure our bottom line stays in the black takes planning, sacrifice and hard, sometimes boring work. Many elements of good governance are not exciting – but nobody wants the "excitement" that follows if you waste people's tax dollars.

With every passing day, we get a little further away from the economic slump that started in 2008. Many cities around us still are paying the price for a lack of financial foresight before those hard years. But we have emerged in a position of strength. And in one way, it's a strength we always possessed yet many took for granted. Temple City held fast against the economic slowdown because it is mostly residential – almost 90 percent so. The municipalities suffering the worst were dependent upon sales taxes. Yes, our hometown is quiet – but we control our own destiny and are less subject to the gyrations of the global economy. So the next time you hear an outsider dismiss Temple City as a "bedroom community," you can tell them we sleep well at night.

Our finances are clean because revenue is up while expenses are down – exactly the combination we want. We took in more money than expected because of rising property values, more construction and a robust environment for retail sales. Meanwhile, greater efficiency in City Hall allowed us to reduce General Fund spending by 3 percent compared to the previous fiscal year. In addition, our reserves were bolstered by $2 million, an increase of 11 percent. And all of this was done while leaving untouched our high quality of services Temple City has come to expect, if not making them better.

We found money by refinancing prior debt incurred by our former redevelopment agency. By doing this, we will pay off the debt a year sooner than first expected while saving $600,000 over the next decade – to the benefit of the city and our local public schools.

Also, we were able to get more from less in our fleet services, when we decided to rent city vehicles rather than buy them. You may already have seen them on our roads. It's a win-win, logistically and financially: newer vehicles we don't have to maintain while $400,000 doesn't have to be spent.

One of our most popular recreation offerings – the Summer Concert Series, which draws thousands to Temple City Park on Wednesday evenings – benefited from a 40 percent increase in sponsorships and other outside financial support over the previous year. And that means we are saving and reinvesting an additional $15,000 while bringing in new acts. We thank our sponsors for their generosity.

But this happy news comes from the Mayor, who could be expected to come tonight with sunshine and smiles. However, a city can't fool the accountants, not for long anyway, which is why I'm thrilled to say we earned a clean audit yet again. These independent audits act as credit scores for governments, and having good-looking books is crucial for decreasing borrowing costs when you want to issue bonds. Also, this was the third straight year we received an award from the Government Finance Officers Association for making Temple City's financial reporting documents transparent, informative and easy to understand.

Having an outside agency audit our financial ledgers is just one way we in City Hall demonstrate our transparency to the community. We are using technology to promote accountability and make the inner workings of government more accessible to citizens. We're continuing to make Temple City's public records available for viewing on the Internet. Meanwhile, last March on our Election Night, there was an Internet livefeed of the counting of the ballots. And further underscoring our commitment to clean government, we as a Council as well as commissioners and city staff are complying with ethics training that is far more stringent than state standards require.

Then there is our responsibility to take care of what's already been built. As part of our Pavement Management Program, last year we resurfaced 5-1/2 miles of road. This means that in 2014-15, we repaved more miles than for the totals many years prior. This is a good time to note that starting in the spring, we'll be resurfacing Temple City Boulevard border to border. Please keep in mind this is not a total renovation, as we did with Rosemead Boulevard. Rather, this is a simple scrape-and-pave with minimum disruption to businesses and residents, and it won't require the entire closure of the road.

Finally, there are the small, easily-overlooked matters that are nevertheless critical for an efficient and effective government. A fine example is the much-needed updating of procedures, policies and user fees for our parks and recreation facilities, such as community rooms and picnic shelters. With our limited space yet high demand, it's just good governance and best practices to squeeze as much utility as we can out of what we have. Also, businesses now can renew their licenses online. And we approved new rules for cell towers, medical marijuana dispensaries and massage parlors. None of this is groundbreaking – but all of it is essential to preserve the quality of life that brought us to Temple City.

Now, that was a rundown of all the ways Temple City is a great place because we used our heads. But that's only half the story; I want to tell you about our community's caring, lively and compassionate heart.

Temple City is home to 1,100 veterans, so we always will be grateful for the contributions and sacrifices made by our men and women in the armed services. The Blue Star banners on our streetlights are just one way the community shows its thanks. And last year, we brought back another tradition: The Veterans Day celebration. We thank the help of the American Legion, the Blue Star Banner group and the committee for getting this event back on its feet. Even more, just last week the Council approved funding for a veterans' memorial in Temple City Park, and we're hoping to have it ready for dedication this November.

And Temple City and its partners have taken steps to invigorate the Camellia Festival – the event now in its 72nd year that distinguishes our hometown from all the others. After recent festivals, we noticed attendance was dropping. So we asked why, and learned people thought it was the same things again and again. We listened, and in the previous two years we've made improvements. This year, we've hired a new carnival vendor who will bring in a new, fresh variety of rides and attractions, and we're making it convenient for people to attend by giving them the option of buying tickets online. We hope you will enjoy this year's Festival, which starts Friday and runs through the weekend.

During the recent holiday season, there was a smaller event that didn't get much publicity, if any, but it embodied what Temple City is about. It was the inaugural Holiday Dinner and Toy Giveaway, in which city staff and afterschool program children fed 10 families and gave them gifts. Some of our employees even cooked the food. No city money was spent, but many city employees gave generously. We hope to expand this event next year, because Temple City always takes care of its own.

However, our city employees are not alone in giving to our community. We estimate our volunteers, numbering as many as 250, donated a total of 10,000 hours in 2015 helping at special events, in our recreation programs and at our senior lunches. In addition, the City Council has four standing commissions, plus the General Plan Advisory Committee, comprised of citizens and business owners freely giving their time and views regarding issues affecting the city. If any volunteers and commissioners are in attendance – and some of you may fall into both categories – please stand so we may recognize and thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

2015 was a quiet but good year for Temple City. But now I want to focus on the challenges ahead of us, because our decisions in 2016 may be applauded for decades – or cursed for just as long.

There are many words available to describe our downtown: charming, small, unique. But a few years ago, the words took on a negative tone: tired, run-down, old.

As many of you know, the Council recently ended a lengthy discussion whether Temple City wanted to base its downtown revitalization efforts around drastic changes to Las

Tunas Drive. Because the community made its wishes clear to the Council, there will be no reduction of traffic lanes on Las Tunas. At this moment, there is consensus a different approach can help us better achieve our aims.

However, if we're going to rejuvenate our downtown, let's make sure we do it right. What should come next is asking tough questions before we commit to anything:

- Should there be a business improvement district, where those with the greatest stake have the greatest say – as well as the greatest obligations, perhaps financially?
- Do our existing development and zoning standards to allow us to attract dynamic yet sensible investment?
- Would we want to look into imposing redevelopment powers as way to finance and achieve our revitalization goals?
- Is it appropriate to spend public tax money on attracting new businesses and improving the storefronts of those already here?
- And the toughest question of all: What is our vision for downtown? We can't arrive at our preferred destination unless we know where we're going.

Because downtown belongs to neither the Council nor planners, I don't believe the answers to these questions should come from City Hall. The Council acted when you told us you didn't want something – but now you have to let us know what you do want. In the near-future, the City can facilitate that dialogue.

We've heard time and again, particularly during our visits with the business community, a desire to increase the number of parking spaces while improving the lots we have. This spring, the Council will receive a proposed redesign plan that would create 30-40 new spaces on the former mortuary site, with work scheduled to start in the summer. Also, the city is looking at expanding the lot off Primrose Avenue north of Las Tunas by an additional 30-50 spaces – and we've bought two properties to get that done. And both lots will be designed to maximize safety, efficiency and aesthetics. When I mentioned our rosy financial picture a few minutes ago, this is what we can do with the savings.

The next big project we're going to take on is Temple City Plaza, commonly known as Kmart Plaza, on the southwest corner of Las Tunas and Rosemead. This strip center is past its prime, to put it charitably, and anchored by a discount department store that, while successful, is subject to the whims of its parent company. But looking ahead, the property is filled with potential. It's a big piece of land – more than 20 acres – in a great spot on a corner of two well-travelled roads. The city's role is to paint the big picture of what we'd like built there. All it takes is foresight and commitment.

And that highlights the theme of this year's State of the City Address: Partnerships. You see, Temple City does not, cannot exist in a vacuum. Too much of what we do has an impact, direct and otherwise, upon outside stakeholders. And so we must work to ensure Temple City doesn't just unilaterally operate; rather, it cooperates.

Successfully shepherding an idea with potential into a kinetic development takes cooperation. You see, at Temple City Plaza there is no one landowner. So the challenge was building consensus among these property owners to determine the site's future. Let's have a representative of one property tell you what's going on:

[VIDEO]

Bill Lang, please stand so we may thank you for your commitment to a better Temple City.

This project gets to the bigger picture of what Temple City wants from new commercial developments. The Council and city planners have listened to our residents' requests for centers where we can shop, eat and live. Being as built-out as we are, we have to seize every opportunity to maximize the use of a prime piece of land. If we plan properly, we can create something grand, a destination. Let's make the future happen now.

Another partnership has benefited our local school districts and Temple City for decades. As you know, recreation space in our city is limited, so we've been contracting with the Temple City Unified and El Monte school districts to use their facilities for our STARS Club afterschool program and rec-league basketball. But Temple City's needs are growing, with our residents requesting more leagues and classes. And at the same time, we must respect that the needs of the school districts are growing too. In fact, space at the Oak Avenue Intermediate School gym may not be available this summer, which could limit – or even eliminate – the city's athletic programs. If we're going to augment our current recreational facilities, we must find alternatives.

And that's why we're looking into renting space from local churches. Their facilities are not used as much during the week, which is when the city has many of its programs. Immanuel Church and the city currently are deep into negotiations and an agreement most likely will be executed this spring, which will allow for us to use the church's gym and dance room so we may continue our robust recreational programming. The city also is in talks with First Lutheran Church for a similar arrangement with its facilities.

There is another partnership that has delivered Temple City a much-desired improvement to our recreation infrastructure. By mid-year, at Live Oak Park we are expected to open a new walking path. This half-mile-long path will be rubberized, ADA-compliant, wider than most so people can move in either direction, and pet-friendly with waste stations and dual-height drinking fountains to refresh both dog and owner. We expect construction to start in April, with an official grand-opening event in early summer.

If you're wondering about the cost of the path, let me assure you the city's outlay is only $80,000 – one-quarter the total tab of $320,000. Remember what I said about how we're saving money in City Hall? This is just the kind of project that we can better afford thanks to that increase in efficiency.

The rest of the path's cost is being paid via county bond money. Let's learn a little more about that.

[VIDEO]

Brian Mejia, please stand so we can thank you for this addition to our park.

And thanks again to this partnership, there may be another wonderful addition coming to Temple City. We currently are in negotiations to open the county's first children's library somewhere in the Civic Center complex. If it comes together, our city will have an unmatched facility for promoting literacy, culture and fun. More information is expected be brought before the Council later this summer.

This path and library are only two demonstrations of Temple City's partnerships with other governments in our region. You may not know that Councilmembers also sit on panels comprised of other local elected officials. Councilmember Sternquist is part of the Governing Board of the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, on the Regional Transportation Committee of the Southern California Association of Governments, and soon to have a seat on the Foothill Transit Governing Board. And I serve on the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority.

On these boards, we look for regional solutions to problems that are too big to be handled locally. For example, the Council of Governments, better known as the COG, has been working on stormwater runoff rules – not a sexy issue but one that can hit cities with huge financial expenses. And at the CJPIA, our goal is to control the cost of liability insurance for public-sector organizations such as Temple City. On both of these panels, Temple City has a voice in finding solutions. And we've reached a point where Temple City does more than give an opinion. I am on the CJPIA's Executive Committee, where I can <u>lead</u> the conversation. I got to that position through experience gained through seniority, as on these regional bodies it takes time for an elected official to find their footing. In the future, the other members of our Council should enjoy the same opportunities for leadership.

I want to close my remarks by talking about another partnership of Temple City's. But in this case, we're not pairing with an outside stakeholder. Rather, it's a partnership we've made with our future.

After my Council colleagues and I are long gone from City Hall, one of the innovations I am proudest to leave behind is the establishment of our award-winning Youth Committee. It began as a way to work with our local schools so students could gain volunteer experience. But the talent was being wasted on duties such as setting up special events. So we expanded the role of the Committee because the goal was to give these students insight into how government works. Now they're learning more than in a typical Civics class; even better, the focus is local rather than at the national or state level.

For example, the Committee decided it wanted to look at possibilities for downtown revitalization. To learn more, they toured other local downtowns, compiling their findings for peer review. In addition, they've worked to promote water conservation. Our local water purveyors contributed $1,500 for a water conservation drive, and thanks to one initiative soon there will be barrels at Temple City High School to collect rain. To encourage reading and enhance the community, they plan to hold a book drive and open little libraries throughout town where residents can gather to share their favorite literature. The first two little libraries will be installed later this spring at Live Oak and Temple City parks.

Members of the Youth Committee even took it upon themselves to join the Community Emergency Response Team, as well as convincing their peers to do the same. After a full weekend of training, they now have basic knowledge of what to do in the aftermath of a disaster, such as shutting off the gas and power or executing triage for first aid when first responders can't be on the scene in time. In addition to bolstering the community's readiness, this training fosters critical skills such as problem solving, teamwork, creativity, leadership and communication.

As wonderful as these contributions are for Temple City, this was not the goal in starting up the Youth Committee. Let's have a member explain:

[VIDEO]

Members of the Youth Committee, what you've given to Temple City is nothing compared to what you'll give to the world. Please stand so we may recognize and thank you.

To deliver upon that potential, it is now up to us – the Council, city staff, residents and business owners. Separately, it would be a struggle. But as partners, it will be a success.

Thank you very much for coming and good night.

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