



2019 STATE OF THE CITY

INTRODUCTION

Thank you Zoe. Good evening Temple City. It's my privilege and honor, as mayor, to deliver the State of the City. Tonight is not simply a summary of what has happened in the past year; no, it's much more than that. It's a celebration of our community, a celebration of the spirit of Temple City that embodies everything that we do. It's the culmination of a lot of hard work and dedication from an amazing team of public servants. First, I'd like to recognize my fellow colleagues on city council: Mayor Pro Tem Nannette Fish, Councilmember Vincent Yu, Councilmember Cynthia Sternquist, and Councilmember Tom Chavez. I'd also like to recognize our city manager Mr. Bryan Cook, who leads an incredible team of city staff that are instrumental in so much that we have accomplished. Thank you for all that you do.

Let's start by going back in time, back to May 30, 1923, when Walter Temple purchased 400 acres of land east of San Gabriel and established the Town of Temple. Originally recorded with the LA County Tax Assessor as Tract 6561, Walter Temple took this land, divided it into individual lots and created a park facing Las Tunas. With this simple blueprint, the foundation was established for the place we call home today, Temple City. Times have changed a lot since our city's founding. Walter Temple founded our city during the Roaring Twenties and the fiscal structure of local municipalities were much different then. Today, the growth of our regional economy can be best described as slow or even stagnant. We can see red flags popping up in our neighboring cities that are declaring fiscal emergencies in the face of an uncertain economic future. Yet the prudent financial decisions we have made over the years have placed us in a relative position of strength. Our reserves remain strong, our operating budget is balanced year after year, and we have been able to maintain our city services without cuts so far. Looking forward, we will be facing challenges from long-term infrastructure maintenance, pension and retiree medical costs, and other tough decisions on how we fund our largest and most ambitious projects. With an established 5-year financial forecasting plan, I am proud to say that we are well positioned to take proactive measures to ensure our city's financial solvency and fiscal health. By continuing to make prudent financial decisions, we position ourselves to take advantage of great opportunities even in times of uncertainty.

CROSSROADS SPECIFIC PLAN

The intersection of Las Tunas and Rosemead Blvd is the perfect example of this dichotomy between uncertainty and opportunity. The southwest corner, more commonly known around town as the K-Mart center, stands as a reminder of the hey-days of strip malls and shopping centers anchored by big box retailers. In the past decade, the retail paradigm has witnessed a seismic shift towards online sales, leading many large retail

giants to begin closing its brick and mortar stores. While our corner has weathered through some of the recent retail fallout, it stands in stark contrast with adjacent commercial centers that have undergone an economic renaissance, brimming with a wide variety of restaurants and new stores. It's clear that this area stands at the literal and figurative crossroads of our city's economic future.

Last year, council formally adopted the aptly named Crossroads Specific Plan, which provides standards and guidelines for future redevelopment of this area. It introduced the concept of mixed-use zoning, a versatile combination of higher density residential with commercial uses. As the economy and our society changes, so must our zoning policies. With our recent efforts on our draft zoning code update, we are addressing these potential changes and have received a lot of interest and feedback from owners and developers alike, who will play a significant role in shaping the outlook of our city. However, cities no longer have the same redevelopment powers that were in existence many years ago; the state has taken that from us. While we cannot control private redevelopment, we presented our vision for the future in the form of our Crossroads Specific Plan. We have clearly laid out the parameters for what can be done there and the limitless possibilities of what it may become. The biggest question we will face is whether there is someone out there who shares this same vision and can bring the site to its full potential. We all know great things happen when people come together and work towards a common goal. As a city, we've done our part in laying down the blueprint, the foundation for redevelopment. Who will rise to the occasion and seize this opportunity? Hopefully, we shall see in the near future.

LAS TUNAS

Another part of our city that is ripe with opportunity is the downtown core along Las Tunas Drive. Several months ago, council evaluated a large number of beautification concepts aimed at transforming our downtown core between Cloverly and Kauffman. Concepts included simple improvements such as repainting our lamp posts, replacing benches and trash receptacles, replacing pots and plants that are larger and more beautiful. We also discussed setting up programs to help stores upgrade their awnings signs and facade, we looked at programs that may encourage outdoor dining and street cafes. The price tag ranged from \$250,000 to \$2.5 million. We decided that we wanted to evaluate potentially expanding these improvements to cover the entire stretch of Las Tunas, to provide better aesthetic consistency and uniformity.

As we continue these discussions in the coming year, there are several fundamental questions about Las Tunas that we will be challenged with. First, we must ask ourselves what is the primary goal of improving our downtown districts. Are we beautifying our streets for the sake of aesthetic improvement? Or are we aiming to enhance public infrastructure to serve as a catalyst for economic development? If it's beautification for the sake of beautification, we must be cautious and take note of a number of case studies in southern California, where cities have heavily invested in beautifying their historic downtown core, only to see it fall slowly into disrepair over time. If we are seeking to bolster the economic vitality of our downtown, then we must

establish a clear nexus between beautification and economic development that is more than a one-time investment that will draw heavily on our city's reserves. We must identify things within our control and things outside of our control. As a city, we have taken the lead in showing our community what we can do to transform our downtown. However, do we have mechanisms in place to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of these improvements? The key piece to this puzzle lies with our business community. Will our business community rise to this occasion and seize this moment to join us in reinvesting into our downtown, to ensure its longevity? Do we have the courage to establish business improvement districts and other partnerships that show that we are all committed to the same goal? These are some of the key questions we will be facing as we continue this journey together in the coming years.

DOWNTOWN PARKING

Improving our downtown also comes with its own subset of challenges. One that we work on perennially is parking within our downtown. Nearly two years ago, we established a new public parking lot on the corner of Temple City Blvd and Workman, with the goal of providing parking relief for our downtown core. To better understand the impacts that this had, we hired Transpo to perform an update of our downtown parking study. This study is still in its draft stage but there are several important points that I can share with everyone tonight. We concluded that our perceived parking challenges have less to do with capacity of parking spaces, and more to do with our management of parking. These are similar conclusions to our last study done in 2012. We have already positioned ourselves to address these parking management challenges; by completing the demolition of city-owned properties along Primrose, we will be improving accessibility to public parking in that area by joining two existing parking lots together; on top of that, we get to add a small park to provide much-needed open and green space for our community.

As Mayor, I also had the unique opportunity to join our staff by walking door to door, asking our businesses what their parking needs are, from both an employee and customer standpoint. Conventional wisdom tells us that 2-hour parking limits benefit certain businesses by encouraging turnover. However, we heard from a surprising number of businesses that have said that 2-hours is not enough, even for some restaurants. As business models and customer behaviors evolve, what are we doing from a policy standpoint to address them? Have restaurants become more of a gathering place for our community instead of simply a place to grab something to eat? Are we considering the student who will stay at a boba tea café for many hours to study for their next exam? What about a dental appointment that will take more than 2 hours? As we grapple with these issues, we must ask ourselves whether our policies are helping or hindering our businesses, and whether we are truly listening to the concerns of our constituents.

When we built the new parking lot at Temple City Blvd and Workman, there were concerns about its utility due to its distance from Las Tunas. I am happy to report that the same businesses that petitioned us to help their parking situation are using this new

parking lot, particularly providing parking relief for employees who work in the area. This opens up more space for their customers and all businesses have benefitted from this addition. However, we can still do better. Similar to how we're planning to join the parking lots on Primrose, can we also provide better continuity of our parking lots along the southeast corner of Temple City Blvd and Las Tunas? Are there potential partnerships with private entities that allow for public use of private lots, adding additional capacity and more importantly, continuity and accessibility to the public? We will find out.

Another question we can ask ourselves is whether parking will become less and less of an issue in the future. With the meteoric rise in ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft, these entrepreneurs are challenging the conventional wisdom that ample parking capacity is a prerequisite for a successful downtown. We are currently exploring a partnership with Lyft to provide a low-cost alternative to travel around town. By providing more transportation choices, our residents will have the flexibility to choose what mode of transportation is more convenient for them at any given time. This will also indirectly relieve parking issues around our busiest commercial centers.

INFRASTRUCTURE

As we talk about revitalizing our downtown and improving parking, we must realize that so much of our community's destiny is tied to the physical infrastructure of our city. Often times, it's the infrastructure that we use the most that we take for granted. Take for example, our roads. We drive on our roads every day, to go to work, to shop at the supermarket, to run errands, to visit family and friends. It's easy to forget that there is a cost associated with keeping them in good shape.

We often get asked why we repave roads that appear to be in better shape than others. It's, at first, a counter-intuitive concept, but let me try to explain with an analogy. Roads are very much like our cars. When we buy a brand-new car, it's beautiful, shiny, and a great pleasure to drive in. However, over time, parts deteriorate, standard wear and tear behooves us to perform routine maintenance like getting an oil change or changing your tires. We do regular maintenance to keep our car in good shape; otherwise, you can only imagine how much it would cost if you never did maintenance, and your only option is to buy a brand-new car. The same applies for our roads. It's twenty times more expensive to completely rebuild one mile of roadway than it is to perform routine maintenance to keep it in good shape. With a limited budget, the fiscally responsible way to manage our roads is to make sure our good roads are routinely maintained so that they don't require expensive reconstruction.

Over the last couple of years, we have aggressively pursued an ambitious pavement preservation program. Our recent update to our Pavement Management Plan shows that we have done an incredibly diligent job of keeping our good roads in shape. However, our biggest challenge lies with the roads that have already fallen into disrepair and require a complete reconstruction. This is complicated by the fact that our current annual revenue sources for road maintenance is greatly lacking, and at our current rate,

many of our residential roads will continue to deteriorate. We are also challenged by the fact that much of this funding is provided by agencies outside of our local control, such as state sources like SB-1.

These challenges are not unique to Temple City, as many cities in Los Angeles County face the same fiscal shortfall. However, we have the unique opportunity to ask ourselves what is the fiscally responsible way forward? Do we kick the can down the road and ask our children and grandchildren to solve our deferred maintenance issues? Or do we look deep into ourselves and take upon that burden here and now, and consider partnering together to generate revenue that is controlled by ourselves and not an outside agency? Is the future of Temple City paved with robust infrastructure that serves the needs of our community, or do future generations face a rocky road? Pun intended.

This same challenge extends to all of the infrastructure that our city owns and maintains. Our Landscape and Lighting Districts are facing similar issues; we are considering future uses for the Chamber of Commerce property. There are many things on our wish list and we all know that making these types of wishes come true require money and prudent planning. One of the most important tasks that council does is preparing the annual budget. Besides addressing the costs of doing regular city business, a budget can also be seen as a reflection of our city's priorities. With more things on our wish list than we can pay for annually, it's important that we set priorities and goals. That is why I am proud to report that for the first time ever, we have developed a multi-year Capital Improvement Projects plan that clearly outlines potential future projects that we may want to invest in.

One of these projects was highlighted in our new General Plan adopted two years ago. Eaton Wash is a flood control channel that is owned and operated by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District. As a city that lacks a lot of parks and open space, our General Plan looked at innovative ways of redefining how we think about public spaces. In most cities, flood control channels are seen as areas of blight and neglect. However, we have seen other cities repurpose this space, transforming it into vibrant green space for pedestrians and cyclists alike. It pleases me to report that we have already engaged in preliminary discussions with the County of Los Angeles on potentially realizing the goals of our General Plan. In the coming year, we hope to better establish the details of this potential partnership that will add a great public amenity that our residents can enjoy.

PARKS AND RECREATION

I briefly alluded to our lack of parks and open space in Temple City. I also mentioned that we are creating new park space along Primrose. What we lack in physical parks and open space, we make up with strong and robust programming. If our parks are the backbone of our community, then our programs and our people that are involved in those programs are the heart and soul.

This past year, we continue to uphold our great tradition of the Summer Concerts in the Park, an incredible lineup that draws in over 1,500 people on Wednesday evenings. We have continued to provide top quality community events such as the annual Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Carnival, Campapalooza at Live Oak Park. We have also continued to work with the Temple City Chinese American Association to host an annual Lunar New Year Festival, which is one of the most important festivals for many East-Asian cultures. It's clear that for a city of our size, we provide excellent programs on a regular basis. We are also open to new ideas and concepts that we may not have done before. Sometimes this means we have to look outside and create partnerships that allow us to access resources that we would not be able to alone. This past year, we had the opportunity to team up with World Journal to bring the first ever Autumn Moon Festival to Temple City. A two-day event that was filled with food and festivities, we attracted over **10,000** people to partake in this joyous celebration of diverse cultures. Anchored by a fantastic line-up of endless performances, we were able to integrate many of our local organizations to showcase their skills and talents to a large audience. We were blessed to be able to work with an incredible World Journal team, and in conjunction with our Parks and Recreation Department, we took the time-tested blueprint of our Camellia Festival and created a phenomenal event that surpassed all expectations. In the future, we hope to continue this path of success, and add another event to the storied tradition of fine community programming in Temple City.

SENIOR MASTER PLAN

Last year we formally adopted the Senior Master Plan that was created by our Senior Master Plan Advisory Committee, which consisted of our residents and community members. This landmark plan acknowledges that in the coming decade, our senior population will gradually increase, and it is incumbent upon us to begin proper planning to take care of them. In fact, we have already begun to take action on some of the goals established in the plan. We are in the process of forming the Committee on Aging, which will serve as an advisory body to City Council on assessing the priorities and execution of the goals in the Senior Master Plan. We have partnered with Autumn Years to provide low-cost and delicious meals delivered to our seniors who may not be as mobile. Even our potential partnership with Lyft and other ridesharing programs can present alternative modes of travel that our seniors can utilize.

Support of our seniors are not limited to improving access to programs and transportation; the issues are wide-ranging, from health care, housing, social activities and outings. We need to ensure that our seniors continue to be active members of our community and that they have a safe place to do so.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The safety and security of our beloved neighborhoods is always at the top of our priorities. Anchored by our brave deputies that make up our Temple City Special Assignment Team and the incredible leadership at Temple Station, our partnership with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has yielded great dividends for our city, ensuring we live in safety and peace. We recognized that residential burglaries are the

most prevalent crime that we have to contend with, especially considering our city is 85% residential. That's why last year we budgeted **\$72,000** dollars for overtime for our deputies to boost patrols as needed in an effort to stifle crime before it happens. This is in addition to our regular contract with the Sheriff's Department that provides around-the-clock patrols of our neighborhoods. We also budgeted **\$20,000** for our popular Ring subsidy program so our residents can proactively take measures to protect their homes.

Our monthly Neighborhood Watch meetings continue to be well-attended, averaging over **100** attendees per meeting. The topics which we cover at these meetings have evolved over the years, and much credit goes to our Area Leader volunteers, who meet on a regular basis with our dedicated deputies to determine the best ways we can educate our residents on crime prevention. We now have **2,700** mobile subscribers and **1,700** email subscribers to our weekly crime blotter reports. This shows that our residents continue to be proactively engaged in understanding public safety issues within our city. We've seen an increase in attendance at our monthly meeting with the Sheriff's Department; considering this meeting is held at 7 in the morning, the consistent presence of our residents at these meetings shows that we have a community dedicated to remaining vigilant of our neighborhoods and supportive of our local law enforcement.

All of these efforts have translated to a remarkable **22%** decline in residential burglaries in 2018 compared to the previous year. That's one of many reasons why we continue to be ranked as one of the top 50 safest cities in the state of California, according to Safewise, an independent organization that studies public safety issues. To all the men and women at Temple Station, to all the Neighborhood Watch volunteers and city staff, to all of our residents who take an interest in improving the safety of our neighborhoods, I salute and commend you for your hard work.

All of these things are even more incredible when you consider another context. The past several years, we have seen dramatic changes in State law that have affected the ability of our law enforcement to do their jobs. From changes in how we define felonies and misdemeanors, to the state legalization of marijuana, the burden has fallen to local entities to combat and adapt to these changes. We all know that crime knows no political boundaries and we know that there are some things that are outside of our direct control. We know this: we will not sacrifice the safety of our community in pursuit of other objectives. When outside influences attempt to change the character of our neighborhoods in negative ways, we will stand and defend our communities in every way we practically can.

COMMUNICATIONS

As we seek to better educate and inform our residents on public safety issues, we are constantly looking at new ways to improve the way we communicate with our constituents. We live in the age of the smart phone; almost everyone has one. Along with the increased prevalence of our mobile devices we have also seen a sharp rise in the use of social media to obtain information. We began looking at innovative ways we

can expand our social media and online presence, to not only provide important information, but also to engage our residents in ways we have not done before. We used Facebook Live and started with a series known as Ask the Mayor, where residents can ask us questions about anything, and we would respond, akin to a digital town hall meeting. This format then changed to a series of interviews that provided intimate insight on fascinating aspects of local government, from our Parks and Recreation Department to our Youth Committee. It eventually evolved into a way for us to highlight many of the interesting businesses and organizations around our city, which we dubbed Man About Town. We discovered how ice cream was made at Cauldron and we recently featured our 2019 Camellia Festival Royal Court at city hall.

In addition to this, we also developed a series of videos called EatTC, featuring some of our most unique restaurants in town. We learned about the unique cultural background behind the dishes served at Summer Rolls, and we discovered the rich family history behind Pepe's tacos, taquitos, and breakfast burritos. We uncovered the great family traditions and recipes that made The Hat an iconic fixture of Temple City. We learned about the origin of Green Zone's emphasis on fresh organic foods and its focus on creating a large variety of healthy and delicious dishes. We quickly realized that it was the people and stories that made these short videos compelling and interesting. That's also the reason why we interviewed local veteran **Art Del Rey**, who provided us with a fascinating perspective of his service during World War II. This is part of our efforts to not only honor our veterans but also preserve their rich stories and their legacies so that future generations may be able to learn from them.

All of this media was available online through our city's website and social media feeds. It offered our residents the unique ability to learn more about their city at the convenience of their mobile devices and computers. While we would like more residents to come to our city council meetings, we understand the challenges and time constraints so many families face. It's our responsibility, as local government, to find new ways to engage our constituents, beyond traditional forms of media.

CAMELLIA FESTIVAL & YOUTH COMMITTEE

We've covered a lot of ground already tonight. At the end of the day, perhaps the most important question is to ask why we do what do. What is the purpose behind all of this planning, programs, and projects? The answer is actually very simple and every year in February, we honor it with our Camellia Festival.

Over the years, we've celebrated our hometown pride, we're reminded of the importance of chasing our dreams, and finding things that inspire you and me. Just this past weekend we celebrated 75 years of kids, camellias, and carnivals. And the key word there is "kids." As we watched our community and our families come together to enjoy this timeless tradition, we remember that everything that we do, we do for our children, for future generations to come.

If we want further proof of this, we simply look at how far our Youth Committee has come. Created as a way to encourage our high school youth to become more civically engaged, the accomplishments of our Youth Committee stand head and shoulders

above every other youth committee in the San Gabriel Valley; some cities don't even have one. What distinguishes our youth committee from the rest is the fact that we have empowered them to make decisions that create real change.

After completing a number of little libraries around town to encourage our young kids to read, and hosting workshops to bolster water conservation, they have also worked with Metro to promote economic development through the use of public transportation. They embarked on a destination tour with Metro's senior managers and discovered for themselves how public transportation can shape the future. This past year they also worked directly with our staff and our city engineers to conduct a traffic and pedestrian safety study around the high school. This was an issue that they identified themselves as being important and they took steps to create change. They had hands-on experience with traffic engineering field studies and design concepts, and their hard work culminated in a recommendation to change the roadway infrastructure and signage to better protect their fellow students that walk to and from school on a daily basis. The council listened and formally adopted those recommendations. Talk about making an impact on your community, if this isn't a clear-cut example of that, then I don't know what is. Please give our Youth Committee a big round of applause.

(Youth Committee members to start coming to the front to each take a piece of the mural from the easel and assemble together in front of dais)

CONCLUSION

Tonight, we highlighted many bits and pieces of our plan to build our city's future. When we look at each component by itself, we may miss the bigger picture. Whether you know it or not, each and every one of you, is a piece of that puzzle. The only way we can successfully build a bright future is if we come together as one city, one community, and work towards a common goal. Let us build Temple City's future together. Thank you all for being here; God bless and good night.