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Mayor Liccardo Calls for Innovation to Improve City Services in his 2nd State of the City Address

San Jose, Calif. – Mayor Liccardo called for city leaders to keep an eye focused on San Jose’s long-term future with an appeal to save, to invest, and most importantly – to innovate – in order to further improve public safety and broaden opportunity throughout the community.

We can embrace a bolder vision, and a more magnanimous spirit-- one shared by our immigrant community and by our forebears--to make decisions today for the benefit of future generations,” Mayor Liccardo said. “It is this noble commitment that must guide us.”

Improving Public Safety & Broadening Opportunity

The mayor’s speech began by recounting the great progress being made on the two central tenants of his first year in office.

On improving public safety, Liccardo highlighted the city’s success reaching a pension settlement last year that will save \$3 billion over the next three decades and bolster the city’s ability to recruit and retain police officers. However, Liccardo also warned that restoring staffing will take time, and emphasized the importance of implementing additional public safety strategies like:

- The recent doubling of Community Service Officers to respond to non-urgent property crimes.
- The ongoing expansion of technology to make the Police Department more effective.
- The launch of a jobs program for teens in gang-impacted neighborhoods, which served 700 kids last summer and will be expanded to 1,000 participants this year.

After noting that San Jose metro area experienced among the largest job growth in the U.S. last year, Liccardo emphasized how the city is making progress in ensuring that more members of the community benefit from the valley’s economic growth:

- As part of an ambitious plan to fight homelessness, Mayor Liccardo is co-leading a campaign to house all 700 homeless veterans in the region by the 100th anniversary of Veterans Day in 2018.
- Through Liccardo’s tech manufacturing initiative and new “TechHire” partnership, the City will provide job training to help more San Jose residents participate in the 21st century economy.
- In the coming months, Liccardo also announced that the City will take up proposals to strengthen rent control and increase the minimum wage.

Creating a More Innovative Government

As he looked ahead, Mayor Liccardo proclaimed that the even greater progress can be made on these pressing priorities by rejecting a thinking clouded by “myopia,” or near-sightedness, and instead by focusing on making decisions that will protect San Jose’s long-term future.

In particular, the mayor issued a strong appeal to innovate the way in which the city’s government serves its residents:

“We must innovate. Fortunately, we benefit from living in the most limit-defying community on the planet: Silicon Valley. We are empowered to catalyze change globally—through our creativity, our innovative passion...our “inner geek”! This transformative “inner geek” is within each of us: the ability to focus our energies on a problem, to see it differently, and to find innovative solutions.

Can we put this power to work to benefit our city... to make our neighborhoods safer... to tackle homelessness... or to reduce traffic congestion? In partnership with our city employees, can we make City Hall as innovative as the community we serve?

We can... and we will. If we “unleash our geek,” we can transform our city!”

Noting that he would be launching a series of initiatives in the months ahead, Liccardo outlined some of his strategies to make San Jose the most innovative city in the nation, such as:

- Significantly expanding online transactions for every ministerial business and construction permit, electronic submittal of every building plan, and real-time notification to customers of the status of her inspection requests.
- Partnering with the private sector to launch low-cost or no-cost, 1- and 2- gigabit internet access to thousands of families and small businesses.
- Opening nearly all of the city’s data to the public, through a robust open data portal, to leverage local bright minds to create apps and tools that improve city services.
- Serving as a laboratory for the latest technologies and inventions, ranging from complex innovations, like using sensors to create a “smarter” transportation infrastructure, to simple projects, like plans for an upcoming competition among college students to design a mechanical device to paint over graffiti.

“By employing this spirit of innovation, we can make San Jose safer, more sustainable, and smarter!”

Investing in Service, Infrastructure and Our Children

Liccardo also noted that protecting San Jose’s long-term future will require city leaders to both save and invest prudently in the year ahead.

Evoking the painful service cuts required to close a decade of budget deficits, Liccardo first called for city leaders to bolster underfunded reserves in the upcoming budget and for the community to support a November ballot measure that would secure the \$3 billion in future pension and retiree healthcare savings from the negotiated pension agreement.

However, given the progress made in bringing spending under control, Liccardo also made a pitch to invest in restoring public safety and other critical services:

“Now, after years of tightening our belt with pension reform, and eliminating costly benefits like sick-leave payouts, we can truthfully assure our residents that any new revenues will not merely feed a black hole of debt, but will actually restore services.”

On Tuesday, the City Council will consider whether to place a sales tax measure on the June ballot. Mayor Liccardo supports a ¼ cent increase to restore police staffing, end the fire company brownouts and improve deteriorating roads. On the latter point, Liccardo noted that declining to spend \$1 today on street maintenance will cost \$5 in future road rehabilitation.

Yet, Liccardo stated that the greatest need for investment is in our children, calling for continued support of youth-serving opportunities like: San Jose Learns, which is providing high-quality after-school learning programs for 650 kids in 13 high-poverty neighborhoods, and the library’s ongoing efforts to better serve San Jose youth through coding camps, maker spaces and online classes.

“We are San Jose”

Returning to a theme echoed throughout his first year in office, Liccardo closed his speech with an inspirational message calling on the entire community to come together to move San Jose forward.

“Together, we’ll provide a model to world for civic innovation, but also for civic commitment. With our minds, we’ll unleash our geek, but with our hearts, we’ll ignite the power of our imaginations to transform our city.

Together, we’ll reclaim our neighborhoods... re-engage our community... restore the hopes of the struggling... and reimagine our collective future.

We’ll fall in love with our city again, and inspire others to follow our lead.

And we’ll proudly proclaim, we are San Jose!”

About the 2016 State of the City Celebration

The 2016 State of the City Celebration was emceed by Camille Llanes-Fontanilla, Executive Director of Somos Mayfair. Mayor Liccardo was introduced by Dr. Emmett Carson, CEO of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. Imam Tahir Anwar delivered an invocation.

The event also featured performances by the Overfelt High School Band, Abhinaya Dance Company, and Nigerian Igbo Catholic Community Choir. Vice Mayor Rose Herrera led students from Katherine Smith Elementary School in reciting the pledge of allegiance, with a color guard from the Overfelt High School Junior ROTC

At the event, City Manager Norberto Dueñas presented the annual Pride of San Jose awards to the following city employees and teams of city employees:

- Officer Michael J. Johnson
- Community Spaces Activation Team
- Hammer Theatre Reuse Team
- Inclement Weather Homeless Shelter Program Team
- Library Hours Expansion Team
- Over-the-Counter Permit Service Team
- “Welcome San Jose” Immigrant Integration Team

In addition, each City Councilmember recognized a community honoree from their City Council District:

- Patrick Ramos (awarded by Councilmember Charles “Chappie” Jones)
- Future Arts Now (awarded by Councilmember Ash Kalra)
- Dario & Ramona Lerma (awarded by Councilmember Raul Peralez)
- Berryessa Citizens Advisory Council (awarded by Councilmember Manh Nguyen)
- The Guerrero Family (awarded by Councilmember Magdalena Carrasco)
- South Bay Clean Creeks Coalition (awarded by Councilmember Pierluigi Oliverio)
- Seven Trees Neighborhood Association (awarded by Councilmember Tam Nguyen)
- San Jose Youth Ballet (awarded by Vice Mayor Rose Herrera)
- Friends of Butcher Park (awarded by Councilmember Donald Rocha)
- Teach Seniors Technology (awarded by Councilmember Johnny Khamis)

The State of the City Celebration will be available for on-demand online viewing on the City of San José website (www.sanjoseca.gov) by 2:00 pm. The event will also be rebroadcast on Civic Center TV (cable channel 26) multiple times the following week.

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