

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE

Until the Delivery of the Speech
February 8, 2018

Media Contact: David Low, Office of Mayor Liccardo: 408-535-4840 or 408-499-8328

Mayor Liccardo Delivers his 4th State of the City Address

Mayor outlines a vision for how San Joseans can build on the significant successes achieved the past three years to confront the region's affordable housing crisis and other pressing challenges

San Jose, Calif. – Mayor Sam Liccardo delivered his fourth State of the City Address this evening, unveiling a vision for how San Joseans can tackle the great urban challenges of our day and continue the momentum built over the past three years to create a safer, stronger and more equitable city.

“The state of our city is strong, and getting stronger; experiencing economic vitality as it never has before – yet the great paradox of our prosperity lies in our thousands of neighbors who struggle weekly to pay rent in an economy that increasingly marginalizes many,” said Mayor Liccardo.

To confront this paradox, and the other challenges confronting our city, Mayor Liccardo called on the community to continue embracing the same “collective resilience” that has fueled many notable accomplishments over the past three years, including:

- **SJPD is “Rising Again”:** Since reaching a settlement around pension reform, the San Jose Police Department has added 150 new officers over the last year.
- **Raising the Minimum Wage:** Thanks to a regional effort that included community advocates and mayors throughout the county, San Jose and seven surrounding cities will raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2019.
- **Mobilizing the Community to Fight Blight:** the #BeautifySJ initiative has forged a new path for reducing trash, graffiti and blight in the city by mobilizing tens-of-thousands of residents, and re-focusing City resources.
- **Responding to the Flood:** And most notably, in the aftermath of the devastating Coyote Creek flood last February, the community rallied together to clean up hundreds of homes in five neighborhoods, raise more than \$7 million to support flood victims, and secure safe and stable housing for every single displaced family.

As Mayor Liccardo declared, *“By embracing the same collaborative ethos that animated our response to the flood, we will go much farther, together.”*

Addressing the Affordable Housing Crisis

As he looked ahead to the year ahead, Mayor Liccardo singled out Silicon Valley's affordable housing crisis as both the region's most dire needs and one of his top priorities.

To address this challenge, Mayor Liccardo highlighted key elements of the ambitious housing plan he released last fall, with **a goal of building 25,000 homes – including 10,000 affordable units in the next five years:**

- Reducing the zoning and regulatory barriers to build high-density housing in our Downtown and near transit.
- Revitalizing declining business districts, catalyzing new urban villages, and replacing replace bars, liquor stores, and other neighborhood nuisances with new development.
- Finding innovative ways to finance rent-restricted apartments.
- Challenging our wealthier suburbs to do more to house those who work there.

While acknowledging there is much work to do, Mayor Liccardo also shared that **there are already 8,400 new housing units in the pipeline, including more than a dozen affordable housing projects.** He also renewed his call for the entire community to come together to house the community’s most vulnerable residents: our homeless neighbors:

For thousands of San Joseans sleeping outside, though, this crisis won’t patiently wait for apartment construction on three-year development cycles at a cost of six hundred thousand dollars per unit,” urged Mayor Liccardo. “We must push for ways to accelerate construction and reduce its cost, such as converting motels to apartments, building tiny home villages, and using prefabrication methods. As we build more permanent housing, we’ll also work on expanding temporary shelter by creating safe parking areas, and by partnering with congregations in the Winter Faith Collaborative.

“Working together, let’s make San Jose a national model of inclusion.”

Outlining the Mayor’s Other Top Priorities for the Year

The Mayor focused the rest of his speech on how, working together, San Jose could serve as a model for addressing three other critical urban challenges: diminishing opportunity, scarce municipal resources, and climate change.

- **Broadening Opportunity for Our Residents**

“We can also do more to help thousands of our families who struggle against the headwinds of globalization, automation, and technological change. While we cannot change those winds, we can adjust our sails to expand opportunity, particularly for our youth.”

In addition to the successful initiatives launched during his tenure – including his teen jobs (SJ Works) and youth after-school learning (SJ Learns) programs, pilot projects to bring broadband internet service to underserved neighborhoods, and a collaboration with community colleges to provide full-cost scholarships to low-income students – Mayor Liccardo also announced that the City would be launching a **5K Coding Challenge** later this month, with a goal of helping 5,000 low-income students learn coding skills.

- **Restoring and Enhancing City Services**

The Mayor also urged city leaders to embrace a more sustainable fiscal strategy that does not solely rely on continually raising taxes or cutting services. This included calls for:

- Innovation: through San Jose’s Smart City Vision, the city has found numerous ways to leverage technology and innovation to improve services at reduced costs.
- Service and Volunteerism: through his Cities of Service strategy, San Jose has begun to activate people of all ages interested in donating their time to support city services.
- Job Growth: nothing that all cities rely enormously on tax revenues generated by local employers, and the fact that San Jose lags far behind its neighboring cities in both, the mayor urged city leaders to remain focused on facilitating new job growth:

“From Alum Rock to Santana Row; from Little Saigon to Calle Willow, we can expand job opportunities for our residents, and generate the resources we need to better serve our neighborhoods.”

- **Building A Sustainable City**

Finally, Mayor Liccardo outlined his plans for embracing a more sustainable future: *“While the current occupant of the White House may have withdrawn from his global environmental responsibilities, here in San Jose, we’ll embrace the imperative to show global leadership.”*

As part of a comprehensive Climate Smart Plan to be released next week – with a goal of reducing San Jose emissions to levels that meet the goals of the Paris Accords – the mayor celebrated **the expected launch of San Jose Clean Energy later this year**. Through this new program, residents and businesses will have the option to purchase cleaner, more renewable sources of energy at prices competitive with private utilities.

Noting that 58% of all greenhouse gases emissions comes from transportation, the Mayor also reiterated his focus on advancing important mass transit projects: including the electrification of Caltrain, an expansion of electric-fueled VTA buses, the 2018 opening of BART service to San Jose, and the continued effort to bring BART all the way to Downtown San Jose where there’s the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a Grand Central Station of the West, surrounded with new retail, restaurants, plazas, residents, a few Googlers, and iconic architecture.

Noting that the city’s ambitions around Diridon Station is critical to San Jose’s sustainability – as well as future traffic, economy and fiscal health – Mayor Liccardo commented: *“This our moment to embrace a collective vision that preserves our environment, and our children’s future.”*

Notes About the Event

The 2018 State of the City Celebration was held at San Jose City College, continuing Mayor Liccardo’s tradition of holding the annual event at a different San Jose school each year. As in year’s past, the event featured Community Honorees from each City Council District (chosen by the district’s Councilmember) and the Pride of San Jose Awards recognizing exemplary groups of City of San Jose employees:

Community Honorees:

- Tri-Village Advisory Group
- Rue-Ferrari Business Group
- PATH San Jose
- Jai Srinivasan
- Jesus Flores
- Rose, White and Blue Parade Committee
- Advantage Homes
- Villages Veteran’s Day Event
- Rudy Flores
- D10 Park Heroes: Pat Pizzo, Lee Pauser & Dave Poesche

Pride of San Jose Award Recipients:

- Project ACE Team (for the MySanJose App)
- SJPD’s Safe Communities Team
- San Jose Clean Energy Working Group
- Streamlined Restaurant Program Team
- SARA Bond Refinancing Team

Milan Balinton, Executive Director of the Afriacan American Community Services Agency, served as the event’s emcee. Mayor Liccardo was introduced by his wife, Jessica Garcia-Kohl. Civic Center TV will post the video broadcast of the event on the City of San Jose website (expected to be available Friday, February 9:

<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?NID=191>.



Mayor Sam Liccardo
2018 State of the City Address
February 8, 2018

*****EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERED*****

Welcome friends!

Before I begin, I'd like to thank a few folks, beginning with someone who's the definition of a hard act to follow, my lovely and wonderful wife, Jessica. [*Honey, I'm very grateful for your love and support*]

Thanks also to several members of my family for joining us – cousins Rosalie, Randy, Rozanne, my mother in law, Roberta, my sister Laura, and my Dad, Sal. My Dad turns 83 years old next month, and nobody believes it, in part because I'm going grey in this job faster than he is.

I'd really like to thank our hosts, Dr. Byron Breland & San Jose City College. Thank you mighty Jaguars for allowing us to christen your new facility! Dr. Breland's pioneering work here and in Long Beach – combined with the leadership of Chancellor Deborah Budd and West Valley College President Brad Davis – has inspired our collective launch of the San Jose College Promise. Our work together will enable 800 low-income students to attend college this year without paying for books, fees, or tuition.

I'd like to thank Milan Balinton, our MC, for his important work leading the African-American Community Services Agency, serving our youth and seniors. [*Milan, thank you for your leadership!*]

I'd also like to thank the happiest people in this gym: Ahmad Chapman, Chloe Meyere, and David Low, who, in about an hour, can go home and get some sleep after their furious efforts to coordinate tonight's event. Along with the rest of our small but fierce Mayoral team, they continually strive to help me find new ways – and new fashion choices – to better connect with our community.

Last year, we had a transition at the top of our city organization, and we're fortunate to have Dave Sykes serving as our new City Manager, ably supported by our new Assistant City Manager, Jennifer Maguire. [*Dave and Jennifer, thank you for your public service!*]

Finally, a special "thank you" to Iriana Luna Lozada, City College's student body president, who welcomed us today. Iriana reminds us of our moral obligation to defend the promise and hard-earned aspirations of our Dreamers. That's why we challenged the Administration's revocation of DACA last year, and why, along with Supervisor Joe Simitian and our colleagues at the County, we will fight for Iriana and for every one of our 20,000 Dreamers, all the way to the Supreme Court!

Our Community's "Collective Resilience"

Friends, I come before you to report on the state of our city, and to chart our path in the year ahead.

The state of our city is strong, and getting stronger; experiencing economic vitality as it never has before – yet the great paradox of our prosperity lies in our thousands of neighbors who struggle weekly to pay rent in an economy that increasingly marginalizes many. We share a moral imperative to respond to our prosperity paradox. As a community, how will we respond?

Our recent history offers guidance – insight that came to me last February with the help of a soggy couch. Let me explain.

Last February, the world seemed to be spinning out of whack. A new administration in Washington had just taken office, and our Tweeter-in-chief occupied headlines with his daily 140-character rants over a Muslim travel ban, and his denunciations of fake news, foreign refugees, and even Arnold Schwarzenegger's performance on "The Apprentice."

For San Jose, February brought even worse: after Anderson Dam spilled over, severe flooding devastated several neighborhoods. Thousands of residents fled their homes, with several hundred staying in emergency shelter.

Immediately after the flood, Paul Pereira and I were out with city employees helping residents on South 20th Street, when Paul suggested that we solicit volunteers to multiply our efforts. Before I had a chance to say yes, Paul was already on the phone reaching out to our Parks staff and several partners willing to help engage volunteers, like community leaders Deb Kramer, Steve Holmes, and Tom Walker.

As I arrived at the Roosevelt Community Center that Saturday, I expected to roll up my sleeves with a few dozen good samaritans. I was wrong. One thousand, six hundred, and forty volunteers showed up that day!

As Paul and I carried a water-logged sofa out of an apartment on Nordale Avenue that weekend, I looked around and noticed the dozens of volunteers, all taking time away from their families and work. They were scrambling around us – hauling furniture, clearing debris, and consoling people they'd just met.

At that moment, for what seemed like the first time in days, I exhaled. I silently offered a prayer of gratitude for our wonderful community of San Jose.

Throughout those difficult weeks, our city's heart was on full display:

- San Jose firefighters worked multiple shifts without sleep, saving more than 300 flood-trapped residents, without a single injury.
- With the help of Khanh Russo and our partners at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 3,200 donors contributed more than \$7 million to support devastated families.
- When I travelled to Sacramento to seek \$5 million in state aid, Assemblymember Ash Kalra led a delegation – including Senator Jim Beall and Assemblymember Kansen Chu – that delivered.

- And hundreds of city employees worked multiple shifts at all hours to help the recovery. *[Thank you to ALL the members of our City Workforce!]*

Most importantly, Kip Harkness, Jacky Morales-Ferrand, and our staff worked with non-profits like Catholic Charities, the Red Cross, and Sacred Heart Community Services, to safely and stably house every single family displaced by the flood!

Moving forward, Ray Riordan and Kip have worked mightily with the Water District and the County to ensure we're better prepared for the next natural disaster, by implementing superior response protocols, mass warning technologies, and risk detection.

Yes, we're fixing what's broken, but our response to the floods speaks to something much greater. It reveals a collective resilience, one that enables us to overcome adversity – when we work together – to accomplish great results:

- For example, as thousands struggled to stay afloat in low-wage jobs, we joined with a coalition of advocates and seven surrounding cities to collectively lift the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2019.
- When home burglary rates were rising a couple years ago, we reached out to District Attorney Jeff Rosen, whose Crime Strategies Unit helped SJPD bust several large burglary rings last year, reducing burglaries citywide for two consecutive years. *[Thank You, Jeff!]*
- With our airport struggling to attract flights, the Silicon Valley Leadership Group convened local employers to help John Aitken and our airport team attract 25 new routes since 2015, making San Jose Mineta the fastest-growing airport in the nation. *[Thank You, Carl Guardino!]*
- Finally, after budget cuts and pension reform battles decimated our police staffing, we came together with eleven unions to reach a settlement. Since then, Chief Eddie Garcia has breathed new life into our force, adding 150 officers in the last year, with more on the way — And SJPD is rising again! *[Thank you to the Women and Men of our SJPD!]*

Our most recent example of collaboration remains a work in progress: our #BeautifySJ campaign against trash, graffiti, and blight. Kerrie Romanow wisely enlisted our residents to help us quadruple our volume of junk disposal by introducing a free residential pickup service. 23,000 residents have downloaded our new smart phone app – “MySanJose” – to report 88,000 unhappy encounters with everything from graffiti to abandoned vehicles, and we've expanded our rapid response team to expedite our clean up of illegal dumping. With help from community partners, we have encouraged some 13,000 volunteers to join weekend cleanups, and we've offered small grants to 71 neighborhood associations to support volunteer-led beautification projects, such as painting murals and planting community gardens. Meanwhile, homeless clients of Downtown Streets Team are working their way to self-sufficiency by cleaning our freeway entrances, sponsored by local employers like Supermicro. *[Thank You, Eileen Richardson!]*

We have MUCH more to do, but working together, we're reclaiming our public spaces, one neighborhood at a time.

Of course, we could only accomplish this work as a city with the commitment of my colleagues on the City Council. To each of you, thank you for your constructive dialogue, your leadership, and your collaborative efforts to move our city forward.

Our Work Ahead

Despite our progress, we still face serious problems. I was reminded of our challenges in recent conversations with students at Cristo Rey High in East San Jose. One promising senior told me how rising rents drove her family from their apartment. We discussed her anxieties about paying for college – and of the importance of her getting there. Another student said that his neighborhood needs more police patrols, and more after-school programs to keep his younger brother out of gangs. A third worried about how her generation will bear the burden for our unwillingness to confront climate change.

These students articulated what so many young people feel – not just here, but in cities throughout the nation – about the great urban challenges of our day: rising housing costs, diminishing opportunity, scarce municipal resources, and climate change.

How will we respond to these great challenges? As the African proverb reminds us, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” By embracing the same collaborative ethos that animated our response to the flood, we will go much farther, together.

Let me begin with our Valley’s most dire need: housing.

Addressing Our Affordable Housing Crisis

The lack of affordable housing afflicts our community at all levels of income, from custodians to coders, from cooks to councilmembers. In recent years, we’ve implemented several measures to grapple with this crisis, by implementing inclusionary housing requirements, accelerating high-rise permits, and strengthening tenant protections.

However, two forces are more powerful than City Hall: supply and demand. In the last half-decade, six times as many new jobs as homes have been created in Santa Clara County. We have to build more housing.

Last fall, I released an ambitious plan to build 25,000 homes – including 10,000 affordable units – in the next five years. To do so, we will reduce the zoning and regulatory barriers to build high-density housing in our Downtown and near transit. We’ll revitalize declining business districts, catalyze new urban villages, and replace bars, liquor stores, and other neighborhood nuisances with new development. We’ll find more innovative ways to finance rent-restricted apartments. And we’ll challenge our wealthier suburbs to do more to house those who work there.

We’re off to a strong start, with more than 8,400 new homes in the pipeline, including a dozen affordable housing projects.

We have much work to do, however, especially for residents like Chris. I met Chris, a military veteran, last week at the Vermont House. He suffered a debilitating back injury that left him unable to work, addicted to painkillers, and ultimately homeless. After shuttling between the VA and the streets, he found his way back to sobriety only when he got a roof over his head.

This “housing first” imperative provided the framework for All the Way Home: a campaign to end veteran homelessness, launched by Jennifer Loving of Destination:Home, Supervisor Dave Cortese at the County, Katherine Harasz at the Housing Authority, and myself. Working with many community partners, we’ve housed more than 900 homeless veterans since 2015 – and we won’t stop until we bring every veteran “All the Way Home.”

For thousands of San Joseans sleeping outside, though, this crisis won’t patiently wait for apartment construction on three-year development cycles at a cost of six hundred thousand dollars per unit. We must push for ways to accelerate construction and reduce its cost, such as converting motels to apartments, building tiny home villages, and using prefabrication methods. As we build more permanent housing, we’ll also work on expanding temporary shelter by creating safe parking areas, and by partnering with congregations in the Winter Faith Collaborative.

Many residents understandably have strong concerns about housing the homeless near their neighborhoods. But here’s the problem: we’re not making decisions about whether to “put” homeless people in anyone’s neighborhood. Our homeless neighbors, in most cases, have been here for years. They’re in our parks, living in our creeks, in our streets, and behind our commercial stores. They’re already in—and indeed, a part of— our community. So the question isn’t whether we’re going to put homeless in our neighborhoods; the question is whether we’re going to house them. Working together, let’s make San Jose a national model of inclusion.

Broadening Opportunity for Our Residents

We can also do more to help thousands of our families who struggle against the headwinds of globalization, automation, and technological change. While we cannot change those winds, we can adjust our sails to expand opportunity, particularly for our youth. Every child must acquire the skills needed to participate in the Valley’s prosperity. The city doesn’t run our schools, but we can achieve this crucial goal by collaborating with our schools and other key partners:

- With our school districts, we’ve launched high-performing after-school learning programs, like ThinkTogether, in 16 of our least affluent communities;
- With the Silicon Valley Organization’s STRIVE initiative, and employers like Jabil, we’ve expanded the SJ Works program to provide 1,000 of our young teens with a job and skills training;
- With the East Side Union High School District, we’re launching pilot programs to provide broadband access for thousands of families;

- With mayors across the nation, we're leading the fight for digital equity in Washington, DC and Sacramento;
- With our community colleges and Rick Williams at the Sobrato Organization, we'll expand the San Jose College Promise to our entire region, eliminating financial barriers to college for many more promising students; *[Thank you, President Mary Paazian, for your willingness to explore expanding the college promise to SJSU!]*
- And next week, with the tech community, Jill Bourne's team at the Libraries will launch our 5K Coding Challenge, enabling 5,000 low-income students to learn coding skills.

This is how we'll confront our prosperity paradox together. By expanding the opportunities for our youth, and by confronting our housing crisis, we can build a San Jose where we all can thrive.

Restoring and Enhancing City Services

Next, we must grapple with the structural fiscal limitations that undermine our efforts to improve critical services, like emergency medical response or street maintenance, to levels that our residents expect and deserve. After a decade in which we lost nearly a third of our city workforce to budget cuts, layoffs, and hiring freezes, we've made great progress in stabilizing the budget, but our residents are still served by the most thinly-staffed City Hall of any major U.S. city.

Restoring services amid budgetary scarcity requires moving beyond simplistic solutions of merely "cutting spending," or "increasing taxes" – our residents have endured plenty of both. Rather, we must embrace a more sustainable approach to fiscal health.

First, we'll embrace innovation. Through our Smart City Vision, we're working with partners like the Bloomberg Philanthropies to leverage civic innovation to improve services. Today, we're transforming our libraries into digital job training centers, we're using data analytics to improve apartment safety inspections, and we're automating small business and construction permits on-line.

Second: we'll support service. With Danny Harris of the Knight Foundation and other partners, we're forging a new vision for civic engagement. Our City of Service initiative is engaging young adults in a year of service that will earn them dollars for college, giving mid-career professionals a way to apply their expertise to public service, and connecting our retirees to local youth in our Generations-2-Generations program.

Finally, we must continue to facilitate job growth. Like every other city in California, we rely enormously on the tax revenues generated by our employers to fund critical city services.

Although Silicon Valley has seen enormous employment growth, it remains disproportionately outside of our city limits; San Jose has persistently suffered from the worst jobs-housing balance of any major U.S. city. As a result, our wealthy suburbs get the tax revenues, jobs, and better services, while San Jose merely gets ballooning housing costs, worsening traffic, and more residents needing underfunded services.

Here's the good news: in the last three years, we have started to shift Silicon Valley's center of gravity to the south, luring major investments from Adobe, Apple, Broadcom, Microsoft, SuperMicro, Western Digital, and yes, Google. We've also seen less-known, but fast-growing, tech employers expand here – from Cohesity and 8x8 to Splunk and Zoom.

Kim Welsh's economic development team hasn't done it with taxpayer-funded subsidies and tax breaks, but rather, we've crafted a vision of Silicon Valley's urban center, complete with transit infrastructure, the most talented workforce on the planet, and an increasingly vibrant Downtown.

The transformation of our Downtown will certainly play a critical role in our fiscal future as we revitalize its streetscape with thousands of workers and residents, and reshape its skyline with ambitious architecture. But it will also have expansive impact on the cultural and social life of our Valley.

With the help of key partners, like Teresa Alvarado of SPUR, Scott Knies of the Downtown Association, Leslee Hamilton of the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy, we can create attractive gathering spaces, create an open-air pavilion for music in St. James Park, expand the San Pedro Market, and reimagine our Guadalupe River Park. We are seeing a resurgence in the arts throughout SoFA district, in the nascent Creative Center for the Arts, and in an innovative partnership with San Jose State University at the Hammer Theater. *[Thank you, Connie Martinez at SV Creates!]*

All of this will help us achieve our long-held aspirations for a vibrant city center.

But we won't stop in Downtown; we can also create more opportunity on BOTH ends of Santa Clara Street. From Alum Rock to Santana Row; from Little Saigon to Calle Willow, we can expand job opportunities for our residents, and generate the resources we need to better serve our neighborhoods.

Fighting Climate Change

Finally, we're facing a global crisis of climate change. As my mother likes to say, "we need to save the earth, because it's the only planet with chocolate."

Like so many of our neighbors, she tell me how worried she is about the condition of the planet that we're leaving her grandchildren – while also finding opportunities to suggest that I could do more to actually add to the number of her grandchildren.

While the current occupant of the White House may have withdrawn from his global environmental responsibilities, here in San Jose, we'll embrace the imperative to show global leadership.

Just last year, the United Nations named San Jose the top U.S. metro in meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Next week, we'll release our Climate Smart plan, making San Jose among the very first American cities to plot a path to Paris – that is, to formulate a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions sufficiently to meet the sustainability goals of the Paris Accords.

We'll put that plan to work immediately: this year, we'll become the largest U.S. city to launch "community choice energy," giving our residents and businesses the choice of renewable sources for their electricity, at rates

competitive with private utilities. Revenues from this venture will eventually support investment in renewables and energy-saving retrofits, with a particular emphasis on enabling our least affluent residents to benefit from the green dividend.

Since transportation produces 58% of our greenhouse gas emissions, our plan also emphasizes changing how we move. This year, we'll begin to see the fruits of the decades of effort by Carl Guardino and many partners to secure funding for a modernized CalTrain and an extended BART. Under the leadership of VTA General Manager Nuria Fernandez, we're launching our first bus-rapid-transit system and a new fleet of electric-powered buses, and yes, we'll open San Jose's first BART station this year in Berryessa –under budget. *[Thank you, Mayor Ron Gonzales, for your vision two decades ago!]*

Working in collaboration with Transportation Director Jim Ortbal and many regional partners, we'll continue the push to bring BART all the way through Downtown, to join with an electrified Caltrain, High Speed Rail, and five other transit systems to create the Grand Central Station of the Bay Area... *that is the SAN JOSE Bay Area.* We'll surround that station with new retail, restaurants, plazas, residents, a few Googlers, and iconic architecture.

I mention our ambitions for Diridon Station for an important reason: our sustainability – not to mention our traffic, economy, and fiscal health—depend first and foremost on how we build our city. We have to halt decades of sprawling development that has left our residents without commute options beyond enduring clogged conga lines masquerading as freeways. That's why we must stand together with environmental advocates like Megan Medeiros of the Committee for Green Foothills, and James Eggers of the Sierra Club against developers seeking to cover our Evergreen foothills with a gated community. That's why we must work together to reimagine the possibilities of Coyote Valley, for wildlife protection, recreation, flood control, and conservation.

This our moment to embrace a collective vision that preserves our environment, and our children's future.

Closing

Friends, I took advantage of the beautiful sunshine last Sunday to escape the instant replays and Super Bowl commercials, and I hopped on my bike for a ride up the Guadalupe River Trail.

As I rode past River Park, I saw many families out walking, enjoying the final hour of daylight. I stopped at the Alviso trailhead, to gaze out into the twilight-colored bay, all the while overhearing parents and children chatting on the trail, speaking in English, Hindi, Mandarin, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Here we were: people from around the world, enjoying the same San Jose sunset.

I recalled the feeling I experienced a year ago, while lugging that soggy couch. I quietly repeated that familiar prayer of gratitude, feeling blessed to live in such a wonderful community as San Jose.

Amid the intense divisions that vex our nation, we can make San Jose a model for bring diverse people together to confront our common challenges. Join me, and more importantly, let's join each other.

Together, we can forge the most successful multicultural community on the planet. Together, we are San Jose.