

MAYOR BAO NGUYEN'S STATE OF THE CITY SPEECH

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2016
EMBASSY SUITES HOTEL, 11767 HARBOR BLVD.

On July 5th 2015, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama honored us with his presence.

He said, "More people today are showing interest in inner values such as Compassion and Forgiveness. These thoughts and experiences bring us peace, inner strength and comfort."

And on that day, we presented His Holiness with a City Proclamation, proclaiming Garden Grove as a City of Compassion.

Ladies and gentlemen, His Holiness was right. Our chamber of commerce, the citizens of Garden Grove, our City Council, City officials and staff as well as the businesses in Garden Grove have made this the City of Compassion.

It is my pleasure to speak to you today and thank everyone who have made this event possible.

Along with me here today are members of your city council: Mayor Pro Tem Steve Jones Council Member Chris Phan, Council Member Phat Bui, and Council Member Kris Beard... Let's give them a round of applause for their contributions to our City.

The opportunity to work with such a diverse group of leaders has been invaluable to me. We all strive for excellence in our own way even though we may not always agree on everything. In the end we are here to work together as a Council and we all keep the best interests of our great city in mind.

I'd also like to wish everyone in our wonderful city, a very happy 60th Anniversary!

Our city has come a long way. Originally, Main Street was a small downtown section, with a hardware store, a bank and a malt shop. While historical Main Street remains an important part of our city, Garden Grove has grown in its services, diversity and more things to do.

And speaking of more to do, I am in my 2nd year as your Mayor, and we have a lot more to do to serve our city!

A lot has happened this past year and we have some wonderful plans for the upcoming year.

2015 was a year of new leadership. We swore in a new City Council member and a new Mayor; we hired a new City Manager, Police Chief and Fire Chief. Would Mr. Scott Stiles, Chief Elgin, and Chief Schultz please stand and be recognized?

New leadership brings fresh perspectives, fresh perspectives foster creative thinking, and that creative thinking when turned into action, brings better results.

In May 2015, the Garden Grove City Council approved a Strategic Plan to take action on City Council priorities. Throughout this address, I will update you on many of the items from that plan as well as share future plans.

One of my most important priorities as a Mayor is to improve and enhance transparency and efficiency in our city. I am happy to report that we have achieved measurable success in that area through harnessing technology that increases community engagement and public safety.

Throughout human history, person to person connectivity has driven commerce and developed economies. With today's technological advancements, we are able to communicate with existing and potential stakeholders across time and space.

With that in mind, one of our first initiatives was to re-build a modern, well designed City website. Our new website has a responsive design, sleeker look, new features and technological enhancements. This allows users to easily view stories, find city services and navigate using desktop as well as mobile devices.

We've also made an investment in a new website for the Grove District - Anaheim Resort. The website further promotes this stretch of Harbor Boulevard with nine modern hotels, several restaurants and event centers just minutes away from Disneyland. The site has detailed

information about hotels – from the Hyatt Regency to the soon-to-open Great Wolf Lodge Southern California – as well as restaurants and various activities tourists can enjoy.

Continuing with the idea of online tools, the City of Garden Grove partnered with Google's, "Let's Put Our City on the Map" program.

This program helps local businesses get their information online and on Google maps. It helps strengthen our communities by connecting local businesses to customers so they can easily support each other. And because our customers come from our city as well as from areas outside, this becomes especially helpful to businesses in Garden Grove.

Some of you may have heard me refer to our city as "Silicon Grove." The Silicon Valley at one time was just like us. It began as a fruit growing area. Today, the fruit groves have been replaced with tech companies and tech start-ups. Our economy can only benefit from promoting technology companies. Which is why in June 2015, we brought "Startup Weekend" to Garden Grove.

Startup Weekend is a global grassroots movement that hosts weekend long workshops. It allows active and potential entrepreneurs to learn the basics of founding startups and launching ventures, all in the span of a weekend. Our event attracted the sharpest and most passionate young minds in our area and was very successful!

An important part of our strategic plan has been our Communication Strategy. We are committed to improving communications in our city. In Garden Grove, communication is seen as an important role of government, and an essential component of the democratic process. It is a fundamental component of the City's mission and vision.

For our communication strategy to be successful, each policy or program had to meet one or more of these five objectives. It had to increase awareness among our key audiences; it had to increase engagement with residents; it had to provide access and reduce barriers; it had to promote transparency; and it had to reinforce credibility.

Promoting transparency was at the top of my list of things to do. A transparent government not only makes us accountable, but also gets people interested in paying attention.

At the direction of the Garden Grove City Council, the City has created the Open Government webpage. It allows users to easily access public information about the City, including its finances, its officials, and other open government resources.

Increasing awareness and engagement was also important. To meet that need, our city now has a new re-designed mobile app. The app provides a connection between the City and its citizens and visitors. It gives users convenient access to the latest news, upcoming events, and information about Garden Grove. It also allows you to look up City contacts and services, receive discounts and coupons from businesses, as well as instant notifications for events and emergencies.

We also have a new Citizen Request tool that allows citizens to request services, such as graffiti removal, pothole repair, or water waste, via the City's website or mobile app.

Public records requests can now be submitted online on our website. The public can inspect or receive a copy of any record except those documents that are exempt from disclosure by law.

Our Public Safety agencies—Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services—work together, often putting their lives at risk, to ensure that our citizens feel secure in their neighborhoods.

As the leaders of this city, our job is to ensure that safety agencies are provided with modern tools and infrastructure that will allow them to stay current and that will be an area of focus in 2016.

The City of Garden Grove has not built a new Fire Station in more than 40 years. Built in 1971, Fire Station No. 6 has significant operational deficiencies and on-going maintenance problems due to its age.

The City recently conducted a series of neighborhood meetings to select a new location to replace the existing fire station. The location will be announced very soon.

The total estimated project cost for the fire station including park improvements, is six million dollars. The City of Garden Grove has refunded a Certificate of Participation Bond, which is providing 100% of the funds for development.

Once the plans are approved, the project is anticipated to take between 9-12 months for the completion of construction of the new fire station and adjacent community room. The anticipated completion date is fall of 2017.

The high quality of life enjoyed by the residents of Garden Grove is directly related to the Police and Fire Department's commitment to serving and protecting our community. This commitment can only be fulfilled by constantly sourcing and filling vacancies that are created by attrition. Both the Police and the Fire departments are actively recruiting and hiring for these vacancies.

The Police Department has purchased new public safety software to better serve the community. After extensive testing and research, Spillman Technologies' Records Management System and Computer-Aided Dispatch was selected to replace our aging software that was purchased in 1999.

Department personnel will have the ability to search for information gathered by participating agencies.

Access to more information makes it easier for the department to investigate and solve cases that cross jurisdictional lines.

The Brookhurst Street project is now complete. This one-mile major reconstruction project was divided into two sections: from Hazard to Westminster, and from Trask to Emerson. The capital project involved replacing the asphalt base-paving in all six lanes of both segments. This improvement will meet commuter needs for the next 20 years. I would like to thank Council Member Phat Bui for his contribution in the successful execution of this project. His passion for infrastructure and street improvements has been of great benefit to the citizens of Garden Grove.

Let's talk about water. On November 13, 2015, Governor Brown issued an executive order in response to the continued drought conditions and last year's wildfires.

If the drought conditions persist, the 25% statewide reduction target will be extended until October. Also included in the executive order was an item to expedite the processing of all the remediation of any wildfire damage and to restore power plant operation. Currently, the City's state-mandated conservation target is a 20% reduction in water use by February 2016. I am proud to announce that as a community, we have reduced water usage by an average of 24% in the past 5 months.

Stage 2 of our water conservation ordinance is in effect and water restrictions are mandated including limiting outdoor watering to Tuesdays and Saturdays for all customers.

Ironic as it is, along with water conservation and drought response, almost in the same breath, we need to talk about El Niño. In Southern California, a strong El Niño usually signals rain. Given that California is now in the throes of a severe drought, it seems like that should be a good thing, even if it comes with risk of floods.

To mitigate damage caused by flooding during this El Niño season, the Fire department is prepared to take care of any emergencies. Information is also available on the city's website that instructs residents on how to prepare for the season.

Later this year, our city is going to be replacing the current at-large elections with by-district elections. Let's watch a short video that explains that process.

During last night's City Council meeting, the City Council approved dividing the City into six voting districts and preserving a directly-elected Mayor.

I'd also like to take a minute to thank Council Member Kris Beard. He has been a proponent of district elections for a long time and has been working toward a switch to by-district elections, even before we had to. Thank you, Kris!

Our economic growth is fueled by two main funnels, tourism and retail strength. First let's talk about tourism.

In 2005, the city brought in \$11.4 million dollars in bed tax from hotels in our city. Compare that with more than \$19 million dollars in 2015. Planned openings of new hotels properties could take that revenue to over \$25 million by 2017.

The Great Wolf Lodge Southern California is a unique and attractive project that is scheduled to open next month. The property boasts of 603 suites, a water park, seven restaurants, a bowling alley, a spa for girls and an interactive scavenger hunt. When fully operational, this property will employ 750 people. It is estimated the resort will bring in about \$8 million dollars annually in tax revenue, the most of any hotel in Garden Grove.

I would like to thank Council Member Chris Phan here. He's been an advocate for the Great Wolf project, as well as in the beautification of our City in general. Let's give him a round of applause!

The \$137 million dollar sale of the Hyatt Regency Orange County is the highest purchase price paid per room in Garden Grove at \$208 thousand per key.

The hotel, located in the Grove District - Anaheim Resort, will remain branded and managed by Hyatt Hotels. This acquisition serves as an indicator to economic growth of the Grove District.

Other Grove District projects in the works include a new, full service, high-end, 750-room hotel, south of the Target store on Harbor Boulevard that is expected to generate an additional \$3.5 - \$4.3 million per year in hotel tax revenue.

Our retail economy is also in good shape.

Revenues from sales tax are back up from a low of \$14.1 million dollars in 2009 to a high of \$20.5 million dollars in 2015 and we're working to strengthen that even further.

Our employment numbers are also up. In 2010, unemployment was 12.3%, but today, it's just 5.1%.

Just as we work together with our neighbor to the north, we also are working on collaborating with the City of Santa Ana to the south.

The cities of Santa Ana and Garden Grove have developed an exciting project called OC Streetcar to complement Orange County's Metrolink service. After getting off a train, passengers need a way to get to their final destination and this project will connect key employment, population, and activity centers from Santa Ana with those in Garden Grove.

The four-mile route will run from the Santa Ana Regional Transportation Center along Santa Ana Boulevard and end at Westminster Avenue and Harbor Boulevard in Garden Grove, where a new transit center is planned. This brings us exciting new opportunities to create new Transit Oriented Development around that area for low and moderate-cost housing as well as business growth.

With the Federal Transit Administration's issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact, the OC Streetcar has been environmentally cleared and is now in the design and engineering phase.

Garden Grove has a clear advantage when it comes to housing in Orange County. A range of housing affordability keeps our city strong and diverse. It supports our economic development and keeps us regionally competitive.

Over the last seven years, we have exceeded our development of low- and moderate-income housing by 285%, and have produced more than 508 new housing units.

We have also provided nearly 200 Senior Home Improvement Grants, Mobile Home Improvement Loans and First Time Homebuyer Loans.

Last year, we provided over 2300 rental subsidy vouchers, and have maintained affordability for more than 350 units, preventing them from returning to market-rate housing.

Over the next six years, our goal is to expand housing development, and home ownership, with a goal of 200 housing rehabilitation projects; nearly 750 new housing units; and an increase in rental subsidies of almost 3,000 total vouchers.

The city has identified and developed strategies to address the problem of homelessness in our community. The Emergency Solutions Grant program provides Garden Grove residents who are at risk of becoming homeless with temporary financial assistance to prevent them from becoming homeless, and also provides residents who are homeless with housing relocation and stabilization services.

The city is also seeing development of a few new housing projects.

The Brookhurst Triangle project, now known as Brookhurst Place, is the city's largest proposed commercial and residential development. Construction for the 14-acre, master-planned community began in December. The community will include 600 residential units, built-in urban trails, and open spaces that will create a healthy and inviting environment for residents and visitors.

This project has 2 phases. Phase 1 will be completed by summer of 2017.

The property tax generated is estimated at \$50,000 per year, with between 200 to 400 retail jobs created.

The Jamboree Housing Corporation and the United Methodist Church have joined forces in the development of a new, multi-generational apartment community. The development will provide 47 one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments for large families and seniors earning at or below 60% of the area median income.

In addition to the 47 apartments, the project will also include a new preschool facility within the residential community. The development was the vision of the United Methodist Church, who sought an innovative approach to turn their property into a community asset.

For our city to thrive, Garden Grove must become a place where quality of life is second to none.

The fabric of our city is a mix of ethnicities, cultures and religions. Diversity is our greatest strength. A vibrant, welcoming community attracts the kind of industries and talent our city needs. Our common values unify us and that shows that we're one city. We share a lot of things together - our schools, our churches and temples, and our streets and parks. Our job is to put programs in place that continue to improve our quality of life.

One such program is Re:Imagine Garden Grove's Open Streets event. This event creates temporary open streets for thousands of people to walk, bike, play, and enjoy this public space in a safe and comfortable way.

Last year, we added a night-time component – Re:Imagine Garden Grove By Night! As the sun began to set, Historic Main Street was lit up with live music, dancing in the streets, a pop-up arcade, art workshops, and outdoor dining.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions made by Mayor Pro Tem Steve Jones in the success of Re:Imagine Garden Grove. Steve has always been passionate about taking actions that make Garden Grove a great place to live and work and I value his role on the council.

Quality of life also means embracing diversity and inclusiveness. I am proud of our multi-cultural community and that we attract people from across the country and globe who want to seek opportunity and call Garden Grove home.

One such community is the Christ Cathedral. Restoration is underway to turn the 35-acre campus into a center of Catholic life that blends both traditional design elements and modern architecture. Plans for phase one of the restoration, took a year to develop, and includes panels that partially shade the glass cathedral. A recreational lawn is being planned at the corner of Chapman Avenue and Lewis Street to hold 6,000 to 8,000 people for outdoor mass.

When completed, this will be the second largest Roman Catholic facility after the Vatican.

I am proud to be a part of the leadership of this community, both as a School Board Trustee in the past, and now, as Mayor of Garden Grove.

Known as the City of Pride and Progress, Garden Grove residents have had a high level of spirit, volunteerism and compassion. We enjoy top-notch city services provided by the hundreds of dedicated city staff and feel privileged to live in a vibrant community.

After 60 years of growth and change, the city remains embodied in that local spirit as we enjoy a great quality of life because of the amenities that surround us like parks, schools, public safety, local events and lots of things to do.

This is a year of big anniversaries! Our city turns 60 years old and the Garden Grove School District continues to celebrate their 50 year anniversary! Our Fire Department is also 90 years old this year! And both the Community Meeting Center and the H. Louis Lake Senior Center are 40 years old this year! Happy anniversary to all!

Garden Grove TV3 has put together a great video about the City's 60th anniversary. Let's take a look...

And now I'd like to invite our City Council up to the podium.

The state of this great city is strong! Garden Grove is making progress, we're creating momentum, but that doesn't mean it's time to slow down. Just the opposite: We have to keep pushing forward.

I'm proud to serve as your mayor for 2016. Although I'm running for congress, my commitment to Garden Grove is stronger than ever. Let's keep building a city that has compassion for everyone. Let's keep building a city with an economy that works for everyone. Let's keep building a city with a future worthy of all the people who live here and the generations to come.

Thank you all for attending. I wish you all great success in 2016!