

SPEECH: State of the City Address
SPEAKER: Mayor Tom Chavez
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Good Evening,

Tonight it is my pleasure to deliver the [State of the City address](#) as your Mayor. I welcome the opportunity to speak directly to our residents and distinguished guests. It's a great opportunity for us as elected officials to inform you on the progress, successes and future of Temple City.

My term as Mayor has been among the most rewarding experiences of my life. The hundreds of people I've met on this road – my colleagues on City Council, dedicated staff members, passionate Commissioners and volunteers, and interested residents – have one common goal: to do what they believe is best for Temple City.

My colleagues on the City Council are among the hardest workers I know. I would like to ask them to please stand and be acknowledged. Mayor Pro Tem, Vincent Yu; Councilmember, Fernando Vizcarra; Councilmember, Cynthia Sternquist; and Councilmember, Carl Blum. While we may not always agree, we have set aside those occasional differences to focus on the important work of running our wonderful city. Respectful debate is what ultimately leads to constructive solutions, and I am so grateful for your constant cooperation.

I also want to recognize our City Manager, Jose Pulido, who has shown genuine leadership during his two-year tenure. His is a 24/7 job, and I know first-hand that his vision and dedication are second to none. He has implemented a new professional attitude at City Hall and along with his staff, has helped navigate us through these tough economic times.

To our City staff: There has been a tremendous amount of negative press in the past few years about public employees. But we are blessed to have the very best, a mixture of seasoned veterans and ambitious young innovators. As a cohesive team, their dedication to our city was best exemplified by their efforts during the recent windstorm and the city's recovery.

And last, but not least, a special thanks to our countless volunteers without whom many of the events and services would not happen. They represent the very essence of the word, "community," coming together for a common purpose in a place they dearly love. We are very grateful for all you do.

Throughout the year, we have sought to keep you informed about the happenings of this great small-town city. From balancing the budget to

developing a strategic plan for our future, we have known that Temple City's success is dependent on your involvement. The good news is that our city is improving in almost any way we measure, but our continued success depends on you.

Thank you for being informed and engaged. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your mayor. What a privilege and pleasure it has been.

As we are already well into this year, the City is in a phase where we are still faced with economic challenges and statewide budget cuts. As with every city in California, we've been stripped away from our Redevelopment Agency.

The loss of the Agency has caused Temple City to lose \$1 million annually in tax revenue, challenging the City to rethink what our plan is with the lack of funds. We may not agree with the actions of the California Legislature, the Governor or the California Supreme Court, but what is done is done. What will make us different from the other 400 cities or counties across the state that lost their redevelopment agencies is our unique ability to quickly reorganize, and our commitment to persevere.

Of course, Temple City has always been focused and strategic with our budget plan and will continue to work hard to maintain that budget and the services it provides. The lack of a redevelopment agency does not mean we need to compromise any of our aggressive economic development goals. It simply means we need to adopt a philosophy of strategic investment that allows us to leverage other resources. With creativity, innovation and drive, we can continue to pursue ambitious projects and programs that enhance the community without unduly impacting the City's General Fund.

As we apply this philosophy of strategic investment in our approach to the next City Budget, we will attempt to recoup the loss of redevelopment agency income through grant funds, capital improvement projects, long-range planning, and optimizing administration efficiency.

The economic setbacks we faced, and still face today, are not to be mistaken for defeat. Instead, we move forward. We move towards growth – economic growth in new development projects. We look towards defined goals and a two-year work plan.

The [two-year work plan](#) sets the framework we've set up for the City. It is by no means a definitive agenda, but the long-term goals and initiatives are motivation to work hard for a better tomorrow. It will set the foundation of Temple City's future. Over the years, our city fell far behind the most efficient and innovative communities in the San Gabriel Valley, the state and the nation. That is simply a

fact, but through an ambitious two-year work plan and a renewed commitment to high performance standards, we are rapidly climbing higher. I look forward to the day – very soon, I believe – when Temple City will be considered a model municipality for the state and the nation.

One of our biggest projects underway is the [Rosemead Boulevard Enhancement Project](#). Beginning this summer, construction in the city's section of the state highway will go into effect. The \$18 million grant-funded project was made possible despite the economic setbacks we face. I believe it is quite remarkable that just \$386,000 – a mere two percent of the total cost – came from our General Fund, which was only after the State relinquished control of the City's segment.

This project was possible because Temple City is, and still remains, resourceful and committed – committed in making sure we leverage every resource that is presented to us. This is exactly the kind of resourcefulness that will compensate for our loss of redevelopment agency funds. And if it continues, Temple City will consistently outperform other cities of its size.

The Rosemead Boulevard Enhancement project will present a series of firsts for Temple City. Tree-lined roadways, sidewalks buffered from the main road, a friendly access way for all pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers, dedicated bike lanes, and displays of public art – to name just a few.

Many people currently view Rosemead Boulevard as an [unsightly slice of asphalt](#) that traverses our city, more of a barrier to progress than a potential asset. But as we transform it into a grand corridor and gateway to our community, this project will help [shape our city's identity](#). Temple City's presence will resonate. It will give residents and visitors alike a reason to celebrate our City's history and spirit, while enjoying new community-focused amenities.

The [reinvented Rosemead Boulevard](#) will say much about what kind of city we are. Its state-of-the-art street design will let people know that aesthetics, safety and efficiency are high priorities in Temple City, and that we value the merchants that line Rosemead Boulevard. Its new bike lanes will signal that we are an eco-friendly city that appreciates clean air, a lack of congestion, and the improved health of our residents.

And the public art that will complement the Boulevard's other amenities will celebrate the cultures of our diverse city. These many amenities will help to build and reflect a new community image that has been many years in the making. Rosemead Boulevard will no longer be just a way to cut *through* Temple City, but will invite people to make Temple City their *destination*. Let me repeat that – Temple City will be a destination. How great is that.

I understand [construction will affect everyday routines](#) for everyone, but if there is one characteristic that stands out about Temple City, it's the community's commitment to improve. Thank you in advance for your patience during construction. But be sure to look beyond any short-term inconveniences to the source of pride that Rosemead Boulevard will ultimately be for all of us when this exciting project is fully realized.

Another proposed project you've heard discussions about in the past is [The Gateway Temple City](#). This commercial project at the northeast corner of Rosemead Boulevard and Las Tunas Drive will not only become the epicenter of a commercial renaissance in Temple City, but will create incredible synergies with the Rosemead Boulevard Enhancement Project. The \$21 million Gateway project has suffered from plenty of controversy, but that is in the past. We now need to focus on the remarkable potential of this project.

The revival of The Gateway project was due to an innovative City Council, developer and staff all thinking outside the box, as well as Temple City's unique standing in the world. With American financial institutions continuing to pass on similar commercial projects, The Gateway required a creative financing solution. Without it, the 3 ½-acre site might be sitting empty, overgrown with weeds, for many years to come.

The 79,000 square foot plaza will stimulate economic growth for the City and accommodate national tenants with regional drawing power. It will also enhance the commercial image of Temple City. Naturally, we treasure the charming mom-and-pop businesses of Temple City, but our economic development goals cannot be sustained with those merchants alone. It is crucial that Temple City's business community shed its image as being dominated by small, ethnic-based business and attract the mainstream national retailers and restaurants we know we can support.

The Gateway's retail spaces and underground parking will provide local residents and visitors a place to shop, dine and spend time – and dollars – in Temple City. During a tough economic climate in which no banks were lending, the developers were able to employ an innovative federal program that accesses foreign capital. This option was only available to the developer because Temple City has an international reputation, familiar to Taiwanese and Chinese investors. So far, \$11.5 million of the required \$21 million has been raised and another \$2 million is pending. Without this foreign investment, the project's feasibility would be in jeopardy. But with it, we will see the first customers walking through its doors as early as August of next year.

The payoff of The Gateway cannot be understated. It will create an estimated 600 new jobs, generate \$200,000 in property tax per year, and raise \$50,000 in annual sales tax revenue for the City of Temple City. In addition to helping us create a new image, it is also a financial game-changer.

Another property we hope to revitalize is the [former Alpha Beta site](#) on Temple City Boulevard, which has been vacant for 20 years. But now, we are finally moving forward and are optimistic about this strategic site. I don't want to jinx negotiations that are still progressing, but we are looking at an innovative private-public partnership that will result in condos, retail shops and restaurants, underground parking and even a small, desperately needed park. While this is not a definitive blueprint of the site, we hope to have a development agreement in place by the end of the year.

As you can see from our impressive portfolio of current projects, Temple City is on a clear path of economic development this year. The lack of a redevelopment agency is a handicap, but it will not keep us from pursuing our goals.

Last year's hurdles remind us that we must always be prepared for the unexpected. Not all of our unanticipated emergencies came from the Legislature. We were also hit last year, as you all remember, by a devastating blow from Mother Nature – the evening windstorms of November 30th. No natural disaster has ever struck Temple City so hard.

Homes torn apart, trees uprooted from below, [cars crushed by those trees](#) and residents and business owners left without electricity for days. Despite the whirlwind of power outages and damages, Temple City proved that even a small-town city can have the manpower of a large county to recover from this type of tragedy. The strong execution of the City's staff, residents and volunteers to repair our community was remarkable.

The community's efforts did not go unnoticed. We were seen in the national spotlight for our graceful recovery.

Remember the photo of the [fallen telephone poles on Live Oak Avenue](#)? It was captured at the City's worse time, but it's also a reminder of our community's strength to get back on our feet, and to do so in a quick, efficient manner.

This kind of commitment by the City's team of professionals and community members show how we are all devoted to civic service during the most challenging of times.

I acknowledge each and every one of you for your efficiency and hard work in making Temple City its welcoming environment again. This would not have been possible without you.

Tonight I want to be sure, again, to publicly [thank our city employees](#) who worked literally around the clock to clear and clean our streets, ensure our safety and keep the community going during this natural disaster. Many of our employees left the comfort of their desks and worked in the field, checking on residents, passing out supplies, manning the phones 24 hours, and even directing traffic.

Some employees even left their own damaged homes and frightened families to attend to the needs of our residents.

We were able to transition from emergency phase to recovery phase within 24 hours, in large part through the [deployment of County Fire resources](#) (including their inmate crews). They cleared streets of debris to allow for recovery efforts and provided a mobile public information trailer, which was instrumental in getting the word out to news organizations and the community about available resources.

I would like to issue a special thanks to the Tzu Chi Foundation for providing over 1,000 blankets and financial assistance to our residents. I also want to point out the [courage and commitment of countless volunteers](#) who went way beyond the call of duty, as they kept Temple City residents safe. This group included City Commissioners, people trained by the City's Community Emergency Response Team, and other concerned citizens. In the wake of natural disasters like this, many cities report substantial looting and crimes against persons. But in Temple City, there was virtually no crime reported during the entire four-day period. I want to sincerely thank all the residents for their patience and support during this troubling disaster.

If there's anything we've learned this past year, it is to be prepared for the unexpected. We were relatively lucky this time, but we can also learn from the experience. In California, we know that any community is just a shake of the earth away from disaster, and this last event has reminded us of the importance of being prepared.

The windstorm was devastating and unexpected, but it left a strong impression on what our City needs to prepare for in the future – a well-packaged emergency preparedness plan. A plan that has recently been discussed and is now, established. That working document, by the way, doesn't rely on public safety to shoulder the entire burden. It coordinates a community-wide response effort that includes schools, churches and other local organizations for a swift, streamlined and efficient response. It is literally a community-wide effort that mobilizes all the resources of Temple City.

We make it a priority to ensure the safety of you and your family. Although the LA County Sheriff's Department is doing a great job protecting Temple City, your involvement is the result of how successful we are in keeping our neighborhoods safe.

Your involvement at our [Neighborhood Watch meetings](#) with the Sheriff's Department has proven to be a positive contribution to our City. By taking action to attend these meetings, you become a part of the discussion on how to handle

public safety precautions and security improvement efforts. Most importantly, you become a part of the solution to keep your homes safe. As a result, we are very fortunate to experience low crime rates in our neighborhoods.

[Let me give you the numbers.](#) Part 1 crimes – serious offenses like theft, murder, rape and burglary – have decreased a remarkable 19% in the past year, thanks to proactive policing and a zero-tolerance approach. We did, however, see a 62% increase in Part 2 crimes – lesser offenses like DUI, drinking in public, trespassing, etc. Nobody likes to see a 62% increase in any kind of crime, but this figure is actually a positive indicator as well. It demonstrates proactive policing through aggressive traffic stops, DUI checkpoints and the like – including calls from a fully-engaged populace. Most police chiefs will tell you that a decreasing rate of Part 2 crimes is often cause for alarm, because it generally means there is not enough coverage. Our numbers demonstrate a highly proactive approach with an increasing number of contacts by law enforcement. Therefore, we should be proud of both of these statistics – they mean that our Temple City Sheriff's deputies are doing a great job.

To further [enhance the Neighborhood Watch program](#), we have made meetings more accessible for residents and more relatable to their daily lives. We have also scheduled them for Friday evenings, when more folks are available, and even offer free child care and dinner to enhance attendance. We will complete the first round of meetings this year, and will continue regular meetings into the future. The fact that we get anywhere from 60-100 citizens per meeting is an incredible testament not only to the success of the program, but to the commitment of Temple City residents. This is one of many programs that contribute to building a strong foundation of civic engagement in our community.

To ensure the City continues to provide for the community's needs, we constantly seek new opportunities to help our neighborhood thrive.

A new focus we've launched in the City is Community Preservation. The goal is to [maintain the aesthetic beauty of Temple City](#), helping the community to grow and prosper. This is a proactive economic development strategy that preserves our aging housing stock, supports strong property values in our neighborhoods, resolves right-of way issues and even addresses the limitations of elderly, income-strapped home owners. It also creates a perception among national retailers that Temple City is dedicated to preserving neighborhoods that accommodate a population with sufficient disposable income.

Here's something else that sends that same message of Temple City's commitment to quality neighborhoods that sustain high property values: we are in the process of amending the City's Property Maintenance regulations. By revising these outdated standards, we will increase the aesthetic appeal of our neighborhoods and make Temple City more attractive to businesses of all kinds.

Our City is a 90% residential area. If we want well-recognized businesses to take part in our City's economic growth, we have to make it evident that the City's property value is worth the investment.

The outcome for community preservation has worked in favor of the City as assessed [property values have seen a 4% increase](#) over the last year. That increase, according to the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office, was the third highest among L.A. County's 88 municipalities. Only Walnut and San Marino ranked higher, and valuations in Temple City increased at twice the rate of Pasadena, and three times the rate of Los Angeles or Beverly Hills.

However, the visibility of a well-preserved Temple City does not end with community preservation. The visibility and transparency of how our City is run also extends to City Hall.

Many cities, including our own, have had the conduct of their elected officials and staff questioned. This justifiably causes residents like you to question the City's decisions and actions.

With that said, the city has enacted a new set of protocols – or a code of ethics – that has given us an opportunity to become more transparent, allowing us to regain your trust and rekindle your passion for involvement. Our protocols set higher standards than prescribed by state law for city council conduct and procedures, and we hope that other cities in California have the courage to emulate our groundbreaking practice.

Last year, Eric Vail, our City Attorney, asked me to participate in a panel discussion at the League of California Cities annual convention in San Francisco. Our new ethics protocols were highlighted during the presentation and were very well received by those in attendance.

Immediately after the presentation, a young lady approached me to introduce herself. She grew up and attended school in Temple City, and was now in her 3rd year of law school at Cal Berkeley – yet another impressive product of our Temple City schools. The law firm for whom she was working was participating in the conference and she noticed on the agenda that Temple City was part of the presentation on ethics. She wanted to share how excited and proud she was that her hometown was leading on this issue, which has become important to all Americans – on the local, state and national level.

This young lady's hometown pride is further evidence that Temple City is no longer content to remain on the sidelines as other cities move aggressively forward. We are committed – as Council members, staff and residents – not to be followers, but to be leaders. We have already begun to set an example of just what a small town can do and accomplish.

Even with budget cuts, we are continuing to provide the services of the City's needs and I am happy to report that our City's finances are strong.

We have not had to cut any services, which is extraordinary for any California municipality. We've found success in executing our budget plan with well-managed arrangements. We will continue to pursue new opportunities by leveraging through grants. We continue to seek new ways to use different facilities with our shared use agreements and will investigate how to strategically invest in new projects.

With your constant participation and enthusiasm in the City's services and programs, we realize how important it is for our City to make sure we provide you with the opportunity to connect with Council members, business owners, and most importantly, each other.

One of our most successful programs started last year was the [Senior Lunch](#) program. Since its anniversary launch, the luncheon has served over 16,000 meals to local seniors. This program allows for our seniors to receive well-prepared lunches while getting the opportunity to socialize with other members in our community. An emphasis on nutrition means that we are addressing the physical as well as emotional needs of our seniors, a group we value as one of our community's greatest resources.

To further community engagement, we were also pleased to launch the first ever [Farmer's Market](#) in Temple City. We felt this would contribute to a healthier community while supporting the farmers and their locally grown produce.

Our Farmer's Market was a successful pilot program, but we are working towards improvements. We want local and neighboring residents to see what it provides as well as the friendly atmosphere it offers visitors. Our goal is to make the Farmer's Market a destination to visit in our City, highlighting not only a commitment to family farming and healthy eating, but reflecting a true sense of community. In the coming year, we will be pursuing expansion of the market, bringing in more vendors to showcase a greater variety of produce, flowers, culinary products, and other items.

Popular places of destination for our community are our parks. Though we are proud to have two major parks – Temple City and Live Oak – it is not enough. Our [recreational areas](#) are facing issues of overcrowding and aging, and deteriorating facilities.

Over the course of the next few years, our concentration is on our Park Master Plan, a long-range plan to develop additional park space and recreational facilities in Temple City.

While we plan solutions for our future community spaces, our efforts to [accommodate our recreational programs](#) have not stopped. We continue our partnerships with the Temple City Unified School District to use their facilities and will continue to work with the school board to develop future joint ventures. I want to take this opportunity to thank our Temple City School Board and Superintendent Chelsea Kang-Smith for their commitment to providing the highest quality education to our youth, preparing them for a highly competitive globalized, high tech world. I am proud that our community understands the value of excellence in education, and understands that it is a community-wide effort. The constantly improving academic performance scores we see in our local schools are the result not only of great teachers and dedicated administrators, but also fully-engaged parents and families.

It is vitally important that a network of support be woven together to continue to provide each of our students the maximum opportunity to succeed. We must continue to recognize the importance of partnering with our schools. Investment in education is an investment in our future.

As we continue to reshape Temple City's infrastructure and support systems, we are excited to announce our very first [Bicycle Master Plan](#). From over hundreds of online survey submissions, we were able to grasp what we needed to develop to make our community more of a bike-friendly destination.

The implementation of this Plan is estimated at \$6.9 million and will include 29 miles of on-street and off-street bikeways—one of the most ambitious in the nation, particularly for a small community. The expansion will enhance a regional bikeway network and the local bike paths will contribute to our economic development while creating the vibrancy and energy for the Temple City of tomorrow.

We have already started to pursue funding for this exciting program. In fact, in just the past few months, the City secured a \$443,000 state grant for new bike lanes as part of the Rosemead Boulevard project. We are gearing up for the next annual round of available bike grants, and will be pursuing another \$500,000 state grant for bikeways on other important transportation corridors – like Las Tunas, Longden and Encinita – that will link up to the new Rosemead Boulevard lanes. This kind of action proves that Temple City is not the kind of town that prepares lofty plans, just to see them sit on a shelf and get dusty. In today's Temple City, ideas are turned into reality.

In addition to a Bike Plan, we look forward to creating art for the city with the Temple City Public Arts Advisory Group. The [display of public art](#) will be a driving force in cultivating and recognizing the City's culture – giving residents, business owners and visitors a strong sense of what Temple City represents. Public art will portray a city with long traditions, moving forward from a place of different cultures to a unified community in which all of our hopes and dreams are realized

together. Much of the public art displayed along the bike paths and Rosemead Boulevard will be reminders of the beauty and richness of our cultural diversity. Moreover, such displays will become destinations and community icons for residents and visitors alike.

To move forward as a more collective and inclusive community, I am pleased to introduce to you a new program we will be starting this spring called, the [“Citizen’s Academy”](#).

This is Temple City’s first program, of its kind – I think a real model for the nation – to give everyone an opportunity to get involved and gain better insight as to what Council Members and city staff do to make our City a desirable place to call home.

The program creates a unique opportunity for citizens to learn more about the decision-making process at City Hall, and how they can be part of the solution. The Academy also serves as kind of a “farm system” – yes, baseball season has arrived – in which future leaders of our community can hone their skills. Participants will be exposed to every major function of local government and will have an opportunity to contribute their own visions for Temple City. Most importantly, it creates an open line of communications between the City and community – something that has really never existed before in Temple City. Residents will be notified of the Citizen’s Academy program this month and I’m looking forward to meeting the freshman class.

Another example of our commitment to effective communication with our residents is [an exciting new magazine](#) that you will soon see in your mailbox and around town. The quarterly newsletter you’re used to receiving has been redesigned into a beautiful, highly professional magazine that I expect will be winning awards. As you’ll see in the inaugural March issue, our focus will be to educate our residents on important issues facing the community while celebrating Temple City through a greater understanding and appreciation of the community’s issues, people and projects. We’re moving away from a fluffy throw-away publication to something more substantial and informative, and I believe you’re going to love it.

The Citizen’s Academy and the new magazine will be valuable tools for residents looking to get more involved in their community. We’re making it easy to participate and I invite each and every one of you to reinforce your presence in Temple City. This is the perfect time to move from spectator to participant, and become fully engaged in the community you love.

We have matured as a City and my hope is that we continue to grow as a collaborative community as well as a City for long-term economic growth.

[Temple City no longer has the option](#) to sit and wait for businesses to come to us. Monrovia, Arcadia, and other surrounding cities have been proactively reaching out to businesses and developing the relationships necessary to bring about economic opportunities for their cities. It is important that Temple City begins to do the same. We need to make both foreign and domestic companies and investors aware of the opportunities of doing business with the City of Temple City.

However, we must not forget our roots and what makes Temple City a great place to raise a family. I was reminded of this just a couple of weeks ago. It was in the early evening hours on a Saturday evening. I was walking west on Longden after attending a Cub Scout pack dinner celebration. Councilmember Blum was with me and I stopped him to gaze upon a group of young boys playing [baseball on Milham Field](#). It was that time of the day when the sun is just about to set, leaving a golden glow on the horizon. The ballpark lights were on and brilliantly lit up the field. The area was quiet except for the chatter of the players and the unique sounds of the ball hitting the bats and falling in to the gloves. So peaceful, so pure, for a brief moment, all the ills of the world swept away. A snapshot of all that is good in America, an example of what a great community we really have.

We have changed, grown and matured as a City. Last year, [we celebrated](#) our first 50 years. We can now focus on the next 50 years as we continue to be transparent, receptive and motivated toward action. Each moment in time has its challenges...and the opportunity to succeed. Without ignoring the challenges, I remain positive. I am more confident than ever before that the glimmers of hope these past few years reveal the promise of a very bright future for the City of Temple City.

We are diligently earning your trust. We are debating our future honestly and openly while making access to public information and local government easier than ever before. However, we will need to work together, keeping in mind that each of us loves Temple City and wants it to be a safe and vibrant city.

We now have the team, we understand the preparation needed for success, the importance of consensus building, the truth that hard work is the only way and we have the will to make great things happen in Temple City.

Here's to our continued partnership and success in 2012 and beyond.

That concludes my state of the city address. Thank you for your attention.

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