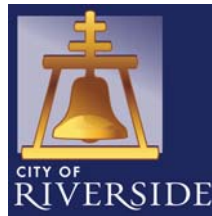


January 21, 2010

State of the City Address



Mayor Ronald O. Loveridge

Riverside, California

RENAISSANCE CITY: “SEIZING OUR DESTINY”

Thank you Cindy Roth for hosting this 33rd State of the City. And kudos to your leadership of the Chamber over the past ten years--you have set a remarkable standard.

Thank you to the voters of Riverside for their confidence and support. While I have stood for election nine times, four as a Council member and five as Mayor, I am especially thankful for their decisive votes on November 3rd.

Thank you to members of the Riverside City Council, present and past, for your active support. More than anyone else, you know my work, and record, up front and personal.

Thank you to so many residents for their strong encouragement in this past campaign. I am deeply and personally appreciative. I will always remember the smiles, “good job,” and thumbs up.

And thank you to Marsha, my wife, partner, and best friend. It is not easy being the spouse of an elected official. In so many ways, she has supported and sustained the past thirty years.

As the campaign for reelection took form, so did an overriding message. To borrow the Dickens language, it is both the best of times and the worst of times. And best of times offers promise for Riverside’s economic recovery as an exciting, diverse, urban, and successful city, a City of Arts and Innovation.

When I visited Sandals church in the Fall, I heard two lines from a song that sums up my vision for Riverside: “For greater things have yet to come. And greater things are still to be done in this city.”

In the next three years, I pledge my best efforts to make greater things happen in Riverside!

RENAISSANCE CITY MARKERS

The first cover of the Riverside Magazine calls out Riverside as a Renaissance City.

Renaissance was a remarkable time for arts, culture, education, and quality of life. It was an historic turning point of commerce, creativity and innovation.

Riverside is a Renaissance City--a description that includes but goes well beyond “bricks and mortar” projects.

Three outside markers—

First, a quick poll... raise your hand if you have seen the movie “Up in the Air” with George Clooney. If you did, you heard this distinctive mention of Riverside in the opening credits:
[music/video clip plays, loud]

Second, it is not just ourselves judging Riverside. Riverside was selected in 2009 by Relocate America as one of “America’s Top 100 Places to Live.” Steve Nickerson, president and CEO, explained their choices as follows:

“We concentrated on the outlook for future growth and ability to rebound... We looked at the local government and the business leadership... We selected communities with visionary leaders, improving or thriving economies including housing and realization of ‘green’ initiatives.”

And third, Riverside was chosen as one of 21 cities worldwide to receive the Smart21 Communities award. It recognizes Riverside for our commitment to broadband, innovation, and a knowledge economy.

It is time to recognize and understand why we are a Renaissance City.

Riverside is a university community. Our three universities and RCC are the City’s most distinguishing characteristic, and important assets. They have the largest enrollments in their history. Together, they are our largest employers. The estimated economic impact of UCR and RCC is over \$1B each. We await the opening of UCR’s School of Medicine and the health and economic benefits it will bring. “In many respects,” said a report by CEOs for Cities, “the bell towers of academic institutions have replaced smokestacks as the drivers of the American urban economy.”

For a personal view, Walk with the Mayor will take place on each campus, starting at UCR in February. Come join us for a good walk, good conversations with chancellors and presidents, and a close look at their buildings and their campus footprint.

What we call Riverside Renaissance is transforming the City. It is a \$1.57 billion public investment in Riverside’s future. Now in its 4th year, we are on target to complete more projects in five years than were completed over the last 30. I know of no city in California, or elsewhere, with such an ambitious “bricks and mortar” program.

Riverside is a smart city. The City’s web site has received the highest competitive awards in the country. Our Information Strategic Plan is, quite simply, the best! We provide free wifi across much of the City. The City offers an expansive digital inclusion program; we are on target to provide over 5,000 computers with training by the end of 2010.

Let me read a letter from a City resident:

“I would like to thank SmartRiverside for offering programs such as the Community PC Program, the Digital Inclusion Program and Wireless Riverside.

My daughter (a 5th grade student in RUSD) and I completed the computer training program with Lori Fry at Lincoln High School. She was terrific!

Once we were home with our free computer, I had questions on the connection. I called and spoke with Jesse at the Digital Inclusion Program. He was very helpful and patient as he walked me through the set up like a professional.

Again, thank you SmartRiverside. You have given myself and my daughter educational opportunities, that in these difficult economic times, I could not otherwise provide.”

Signed Marla Jarvis, a proud resident of Riverside.

Riverside is a leading green city. We are implementing, and effectively so, a second and well framed Green Action Plan. In 2009, we were chosen by California’s Department of Conservation as the State’s first Emerald City. We were also selected in 2009 as one of ten cities to participate in the California Green Challenge--for the record, I was introduced by actress Daryl Hannah in the opening ceremonies at the Sony Movie Studios.

Riverside is a city of the arts. We have an exceptional arts treasure chest, both of performing and visual arts. We have a downtown that is the inland center of the arts. The Fox Theater is here; UCR’s Culver Center will open in October, and RCC’s School for the Arts is coming. Riverside Arts Council’s “Fifteen Favorite Things To Do” is an impressive weekly inventory of major and interesting arts choices in Riverside.

Riverside is a safe city. Joel Kotkin, author of The City: A Global History, emphasizes that “Cities must, first and foremost, be safe.” Public safety depends on the highly skilled, professional work of the men and women of our police and fire departments. Part One Crimes are at an historic low; from 1976 as contrasted with 2009 there is a 20% decline in real numbers despite rapid population growth. In 2009, the California State Firefighters honored two Riversiders with their Medal of Valor Award, Thomas Scott, a civilian and firefighter Jeff Lewis.

Riverside has a downtown that is alive and well. Pedestrian friendly with a refurbished mall, there is respect for the past as well as a promising future as a center of the arts. The Mission Inn is California’s most unique and historic hotel. Downtown offers the best of fine dining. And, it is the Justice Center for the Inland Empire.

The Festival of Lights was a striking success, with 250,000 people, both visitors and residents, coming to enjoy the lights, ice skating, and festivities.

Riverside is a primary retail center in Southern California. Excepting Los Angeles and San Diego, Riverside trails only Anaheim, and sometimes Ontario, in sales tax revenue. There are

many retail choices. No longer do I hear the question of why doesn't Riverside have this restaurant or that store? For the record, there are over 15 Starbucks in Riverside.

Riverside is the employment center of Riverside County. With over 150,000 jobs, the next highest is Corona, with just over 50,000. These jobs are increasingly white collar, located in office buildings across the City. Riverside has more office space, 8.9 million square feet, than any city in the Inland Empire--next is Ontario, with 4.5 million.

Riverside looks good! This was the most repeated comment about Riverside in 2009. We all can take a visual measure of a city--what does it look like? Let me read a letter from a former resident, now living in the United Kingdom: "My wife and I have returned home after a vacation which included a few days staying with her brother in Riverside. I have to say sir that we were both mightily impressed with the progress and improvements that have been made throughout the city in recent years--very impressed. I don't know what happened to cause the improvements to be made but keep it going Mr. Mayor--the place never looked so good. Well done to you and the other leaders that have brought this transformation, Riverside looks great!"

Step back, take a big picture look--these many reasons profile together an extraordinary city, a Renaissance City. THAT is Riverside in 2010!

THE GREAT RECESSION

However, Renaissance in Riverside faces the Great Recession.

At the same time we celebrate the City's extraordinary success stories, these are also the worst economic times since the Great Depression, and especially so for unemployment. The number is now 14.8% in Riverside.

When asked about the problems facing the City, any poll would be led by jobs and the economy.

You know the drill: job losses, home foreclosures, business closings, and uncertainty about the timing and scale of the recovery.

As sales and property taxes have declined, so has the City's budget--down 17%, \$40 million, since 2008. New initiatives at City Hall and continued high quality services will depend on Riverside's economic recovery.

We must bring a laser like focus to improving our local economy, to retaining, expanding, and attracting jobs.

To do so, we must accelerate our ongoing efforts, such as SHOP Riverside. We must use all available economic tools, including those found in our Public Utilities. We must survey and talk with local businesses, and find ways to help. We must support key high tech initiatives, such as the Innovation Economy Initiative. We must use all possible resources to aid and support small

businesses. We must take another look at our International Strategic Plan. And we must be the best place to do business in the Inland Empire.

But, these traditional economic tools are not enough.

In the past we looked to cheap dirt and new construction as the drivers of our local economy.

But, these past drivers will in the future not be enough.

Riverside's success stories offer important advantages as we compete for businesses and residents.

But, these success stories are not enough.

“SEIZING OUR DESTINY”

As a Renaissance City, it is time to take action. We need, and we now have, a game plan to work together for the prosperity of the City! On December 15th, the Council unanimously adopted “Seizing Our Destiny: The Agenda for Riverside’s Innovative Future.” It was chaired, and inspired, by Dave Stewart, Dean of UCR’s School of Management. We need to make the Plan happen. Its implementation both offers and promises Riverside a future as a great city!

It is an Economic Strategic Plan premised on building quality of life. It is on your table. READ IT--you might even buy a latte and take a half hour at Starbucks!

At last year’s State of the City, I recommended that we should initiate and develop a new economic strategic plan. The Council of Economic Development Advisers and Workforce Advisory Panel started a strategic visioning process, with the goal of being forward looking and highly aspirational.

A Steering Committee was invited to represent the community and oversee the process. Public comment was sought with more than 400 people participating.

The result was “Seizing our Destiny.” It is based on the premise that increasing the quality of life enhances smart growth, encourages innovation, positions Riverside as the city of choice, and perhaps most importantly, attracts good businesses and good jobs.

The Strategic Plan uses a traveling metaphor designed to drive and inspire continued action. Since I know each of you will commit to reading it, I will only highlight the eleven “Strategic Routes”: “1st, Strong innovative economy that builds community; 2nd, Well-developed, highly sought-after workforce; 3rd, Lifelong learning for all; 4th, Home of next-century health care; 5th, Becoming a green machine; 6th, Around the city, around the year, around the clock; 7th, Transforming spaces into places; 8th, Big city recreation with a hometown feel; 9th, Creativity central; 10th, Collaborating to build community, and 11th, Telling our story.”

The City Council tasked the City Manager to work with the current Steering Committee to develop an implementation plan and present it to the Council by the end of February. Thereafter, there will be regular Council progress reports on “Seizing Our Destiny.”

This is not a City Hall plan. This is the community’s plan. It will define and shape the future of Riverside.

As Mayor, I pledge my best efforts to make “Seizing our Destiny” a primary and serious focus of the City’s civic and economic agenda.

MAYOR’S EMPHASES: ROUTES TO TAKE

As the City implements “Seizing Our Destiny,” I strongly recommend for the Strategic Routes, as Mayor, nine policy emphases in 2010.

First is CLIP, or Communities Learning In Partnership.

Riverside is one of seven city finalists for a major grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation--other cities include New York, Phoenix, and San Francisco. The purpose is to improve post secondary success, especially for low-income young adults. It is a wide ranging, collaborative partnership. Noteworthy, by being selected as a finalist, we have been awarded \$150,000 to prepare a strategic plan.

This is a transformative proposal. It centers on the City’s major economic weakness, too many residents lack a post secondary education. CLIP strategic partners will focus on identifying resources as well as gaps in data, services, and instruction.

Urban experts stress that the single most important characteristic of successful cities is Talent. There is a very close relationship between education and income level, and the wealth and success of a city. CLIP is now before us--it is our best opportunity to expand our Talent.

Second, 2010 is the Year of the Fox.

The Fox Theater has a storied 80 year history, primarily as a movie theater. However, in 2010 Fox’s future is being reinvented as a premier, state of the art 1,600-seat performing arts theater.

The Fox is Riverside's signature statement as a City of Arts and Innovation. It is our commitment to artistic excellence and to audience enjoyment, for the City, Inland Empire, and all of Southern California.

The Fox Theater is more than an entertainment venue. It is a statement of place. It is connected to an exciting and vibrant downtown, to fine dining, to the best of historic architecture, and to where walking can be enjoyed with safety and interesting vistas.

Kudos are in order to Duane Roberts, Keeper of the Mission Inn, for becoming the Founding Chair of the Fox Foundation. Once again he has stepped up to make a legacy difference for Riverside. A quick footnote-- Duane Roberts is also on the Board of Directors of the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

The third proposal is a green jobs strategy.

In 2010, we need a Green Economic Game Plan, and especially a green jobs strategy. Our goal should be to establish Riverside as the region's leading center for research, development, and production of green goods and services.

Fourth is the Santa Ana River.

By 2012, there will be a completed trail along the Santa Ana River, with signage and linkages between the Seven Oaks Dam and Huntington Beach. This crest to coast trail will be an extraordinary recreational resource, and nine miles will be in Riverside. In 2010, we should plan for a major trailhead and interpretative center along the River in Riverside.

In February, the Santa Ana River Revisit Task Force will present its strategic recommendations to the City Council. The City needs a staff person assigned to making good things happen on the River, able to reach across departmental boundaries, look for grants, develop community support, and emphasize entrepreneurial opportunities.

The Santa Ana River should be more than a trail and a flood control channel. The City needs to embrace the Santa Ana River as a major asset. We need to put the River back into Riverside!

Fifth, arts initiatives need to take off in 2010.

The City-approved Riverside Arts Plan needs to be effectively implemented, and supported. The City needs to close the deal for a Levitt Pavilion at Fairmount Park, draw exhibits from our special connection with the Smithsonian, review the possibility of a Fremont Arts Festival in the downtown and a heritage version of the Orange Blossom Festival at the Citrus Park, and support the first ever Fox Center Awards. Also, 2010 should be a time when we consider choices and possible schedules for funding of the Municipal Auditorium, Convention Center, Downtown Library, and Metropolitan Museum.

In 2010, there should be greater and more visible arts leadership at City Hall. Competing in the major leagues requires a clear champion and identified innovator to connect arts with economic development.

Sixth, as we compete for residents in 2010, special City Hall attention should be given to the City's neighborhoods.

We live in neighborhoods--it is where quality of life is experienced. Good neighborhoods are the building blocks of a good community and a successful economy.

Last week the Northside Neighborhood was the site of my 147th Mayor's Night Out. As I begin my final round of the City's 26 neighborhoods, I would like to host a review of each neighborhood we visit. We could look at the best of comments, data, and plans on what is happening, and then review how City Hall can help.

The web site, At Home in Riverside, should tell a persuasive story of why Riverside is a good place to live. Success stories from Alvord and RUSD must also be told, for neighborhoods are judged by the quality of their schools.

City Hall should strongly support the social capital in our neighborhoods. One major step would be City Council's approval of a formal neighborhood council approach. It will strengthen the Riverside Neighborhood Partnership, encourage the formation of neighborhood councils, and draw upon the capacities of neighborhood residents.

Seventh, the Citrus Park should be the center stage of a major cultural heritage tourism program.

In 2010, the City will actively lobby Sacramento for legislation to become the operator of the California Citrus Park. Kudos to Assemblymember Kevin Jeffries for his leadership, and strong support. The mission of the Park would remain the same. However, Riverside can both enhance the Park and tell the citrus story far better than the state.

Eighth, in 2010, the High Speed Rail Commission will decide whether there will be a station in Riverside, or in Corona.

The City will join with the Chamber, Raincross Group, UCR, Moreno Valley, and others to make the case for the advantages and importance of a High Speed Rail station in Riverside. There are major economic benefits to a station--it is like having an airport but without the noise and pollution.

And the ninth is the branding of Riverside in 2010.

Successful branding requires commitment, ingenuity, and hard work. As emphasized in a National League of Cities column, "...branding is more than a marketing buzz word of the day. It is more than a tag line or ad campaign. A strong brand is the best of your city. It is a revenue-producing asset. And, trite as it may sound, it is vital to compete and win."

2010 will be the branding year of Riverside, A City of Arts and Innovation. It is important that we do it right, and well. The Council recently hired Paolucci Communications Arts to take the lead, and prepare the City's first ever branding campaign. We have come a long way from Happy Side is Riverside!

One final invitation for "Seizing Our Destiny" - on the Mayor's webpage, there is now a box inviting you to submit one great idea for furthering one of the eleven Strategic Routes. Do you have a great idea? If so, please use the "Seizing Our Destiny" box to present it.

As President of the National League of Cities, I will represent America's 19,000 cities and towns in meetings in Washington and across the country, championing their economic recovery. And at every occasion, I will also tell the story of Riverside as a Renaissance City.

LET'S SEIZE OUR DESTINY

More so than in past State of the City Addresses, there is today one primary message, "Seizing Our Destiny." Review the varied Strategic Routes. Support the Plan's objectives. And decide how and in what ways you can help. It is a transformational call, for the quality of life and economic future of Riverside. As a Renaissance City, we have advantages and success stories that enable us to compete in the new economy and global marketplace. We now have a game plan that frames directions and supports collaborations and partnerships for us to succeed.

Michelangelo, arguably the best representative of the Renaissance, observed, "The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."

Let's aim high. Let's work together. Let's seize our destiny!