



**Office of the Mayor
City of Los Angeles**

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**“Laying a Foundation for LA’s Future”
An Address on the State of the City of Los Angeles
As prepared for delivery
April 14, 2008**

President Garcetti; members of the City Council; City Controller Chick; City Attorney Delgadillo; Superintendent Brewer; members of the school board; Chief Bratton; Chief Barry; Commissioners and community leaders; Fellow Angelenos:

It would be wrong to offer a report on the State of Los Angeles without first acknowledging the deep and pervading sense of loss so many Angelenos continue to feel with the deaths of Officer Randy Simmons and Firefighter Brent Lovrien. I want to take this occasion to pay tribute to their service to the People of Los Angeles.

And on behalf of all of the people of LA, I want to thank each and every one of the men and women in our Police and Fire Departments who keep our City safe every single day. There is no higher service to the public than the work you do!

You know, we sometimes lose sight of the fact: That mostly what our men and women in uniform do, is they help our society's most vulnerable.

They spend their days – and their nights – on the streets and in neighborhoods where many Angelenos will never set foot, solving problems for families, on doorsteps, and on street corners, in the parks and in the projects, in the darkest corners of the most violent parts of Los Angeles. They mediate. They officiate. They help strangers who are stuck.

And occasionally, they are called upon to risk everything.

Angelenos, may the lives of these two men serve as more than an example of service, but as a challenge to each and every one of us to give more of ourselves.

Together we have much work to do.

Thirty three months ago, we charted an ambitious new course for the City of the Angels. We issued a bold challenge to our people. We dared this City to dream.

We summoned the call. It was time for Angelenos come together, to start thinking big again and facing up to our biggest problems. We said we couldn't afford to fear failure. We promised not to succumb to the easy temptation to “manage” expectations and carefully calibrate our goals. We said we'd raise the roof. We said we'd go in with gusto where others had fallen short. We said we'd swing for the fences even if it meant occasionally looking ugly at the plate!

We said we'd grow the police force to more than 10,000 strong even though previous mayors and councils failed to sustain the journey through tough times.

We said as a matter of urgent necessity we'd confront the crisis in our schools even though we lacked the keys to the classroom or any formal levers of power.

We said we'd work to make Los Angeles the cleanest and greenest big city in America notwithstanding the size of the challenge or the audacity of the goal.

We said we'd wage a tireless campaign against traffic – even if it meant pushing that mythic boulder up the proverbial hillside – and we said we'd fight for investment in a mass-transit system worthy of a world-class city.

We said we'd champion the growth of good jobs, quality businesses, and affordable housing in a City whose central challenge is reflected in fact that we have the nation's smallest middle class.

Angelenos, in these thirty-three months we may not have realized all of our dreams...

But if I've learned one thing from a life of struggle, it's that the only real progress comes in striving.

The State of our City is stronger today.

Together in just two years and nine months, we have laid a foundation for LA's future.

We are a safer City. We are a safer City today because we are more than halfway to our goal of putting 1,000 new cops on the street! By the end of the

year, our police force will reach its greatest numbers in the history of the City of Los Angeles.

And Angelenos, it is no coincidence that since 2005, we've led a 23 percent drop in homicides and 15 percent reduction in crime. Thanks to Chief Bill Bratton and the men and women of the LAPD, LA is the safest it has been since the 1950s.

We have laid a foundation for the future.

And we've laid the foundation for greater educational opportunity in Los Angeles.

After two years of reluctance, recalcitrance, and active resistance, reform is on the move in the Los Angeles Unified School District! We now have a progressive majority on the School Board. We now have a nationally-renowned educator, Ray Cortines, leading instruction at the District – and serving as a direct human bridge with the City.

Our Partnership Schools will be opening their doors in the fall to nearly 17,000 children and families. We are taking on the toughest schools with the lowest scores and the highest dropout rates. We are doing it to prove what is possible.

We're going to demonstrate how a school community comes together when you give teachers, parents and principals real authority to make decisions in the classroom. We're going to show how the atmosphere transforms with uniforms and parent contracts, when you instill a culture of discipline and respect. We're going to show what happens when we set tall goals and raise expectations, when we publish clear benchmarks and hold ourselves accountable. We are going show what is possible when we make our children believe they can do anything.

Our Partnership Schools are going to be like the first seeds. We intend to show results and expand the franchise every single year. By the time we're done, our Partnership will be blooming – and booming – on a scale that offers a meaningful alternative to every kid in Los Angeles!

Angelenos, we have laid a foundation of environmental sustainability in the quintessential city of smog and sprawl.

We set the most ambitious greenhouse reduction goal of a major American city. We are on pace to more than double the goal set in Kyoto, and we're going to reach it two years early.

We're proving it is possible to light a city with green power. In January we broke ground on what will be the largest city-owned wind farm in the United States of America, and we are on track to reach our goal of 20 percent renewables by 2010.

We are redressing the historic wrongs in the Owens Valley. There is now a river flowing in the Lower Owens!

With the leadership of our Port Commission, we're standing up to the shippers and the big box stores with a plan to cut pollution at the Port by 45 percent in five years. Kids in South LA shouldn't have choke with asthma just to add a few pennies to the profit margin!

We've brought recycling to 200,000 apartments. We've increased the City's reliance on the use of clean, alternative fuels. And next month, we will unveil a comprehensive plan to double the City's use of recycled water and save 16 billion gallons a year.

But Angelenos, I'd be the first to admit: We haven't exactly reached our goal of planting a million trees. I think we may have busted a few shovels along the way! But we are learning from our experience. To date we've planted or adopted 140,000 trees, and by the end of the year we will bring shade to eight of our major traffic corridors with extensive planting projects featuring thousands of trees.

We have laid the foundation. And we have laid it all on the line in the effort to fight traffic congestion!

We kept our promise. We won \$150 million from the state to complete the comprehensive synchronization of LA's traffic lights. When this high-tech system is completed by 2010, commuters will enjoy an average of 12 to 15 percent faster travel times. Not only that, we'll cut carbon emissions by an estimated 912,000 metric tons a year.

My upcoming budget will protect pothole repair and expand street resurfacing to 725 miles. For those of you watching the odometer, that's a 50-mile increase over last year. We've filled more than 800,000 potholes, more than doubling the efforts of the last administration in the same space of time, and we are well on our way to a million.

Our budget fully funds new left-turn signals, which can reduce accidents by up to 66 percent, and we're going to install 100 new left-turn signals by the end of June. Our faster Corridors Program is maximizing the flow on 19 priority thoroughfares around the City. We launched Operation Bottleneck Relief to unlock gridlock at our busiest intersections. Our efforts have saved drivers a combined 244,000 hours. We're installing state-of-the-art "Park & Pay" meters, which allow drivers to pay with their debit cards and their cell phones. We have a plan to cut congestion with diagonal crosswalks. And we are committed to fighting traffic even when it's controversial. With the brave leadership of Councilmember Jack Weiss, we are moving aggressively forward with our plan to reduce gridlock on Pico and Olympic Boulevards.

Angelenos: we are not going to let up! And we are not going to focus on short-term fixes alone.

I am actively exploring how we can fund the “Regional Connector,” the “Subway to the Sea,” and other important transit projects. Believe me: We will be racking up the frequent flyer miles fighting for greater federal funding during the upcoming transportation reauthorization. We're sending a message to Washington. As the climate crisis intensifies and gas prices skyrocket, our national leaders must rethink the balance of our spending on highways versus subways!

It's time to recognize that the only true long-term solution to gridlock is an efficient, convenient mass transit alternative. It is time to get serious about investing in rail again.

And just as our national leaders need to prioritize transportation funding to meet the challenges of today, so too must our state and local governments. We need to think differently about how we provide the transit solutions our region urgently requires.

Everything is going to be on the table – including new local revenue options and private investment in the public good. This month, I'll ask the MTA Board to seek proposals to privately fund, build and operate an expanded transit system in Los Angeles.

And we must also consider enhancing public investment locally. To do so, we will take our case to the people. Traffic congestion costs the regional economy an estimated \$9.3 billion annually. Angelenos are stuck in traffic 72 extra hours a year -- a virtual jail sentence behind the wheel and time better spent free for work and family.

We have laid the foundation on jobs and housing.

Despite the national recession, the fundamentals of the LA economy remain sound, and economists are forecasting clearer skies for LA than for the region, the state, or the nation at large. But we can't afford to sit back. With rising unemployment and a mounting foreclosure crisis, we are doing everything we can to jump-start job creation.

The first two years of this administration were the best two years in City history for new construction. And let me tell you: Even with the economic downturn, 2008 isn't far behind. If we stay on pace, this year will represent the third best year in the history of Los Angeles. All told, that's 110,000 jobs.

Our downtown is enjoying a dramatic rebirth. For the first time in City history, we are designing LA's future based on principles of smart planning.

We're showing it's possible to balance the needs of business and labor. We stood up with Bill Rosendahl in support of hotel workers at the airport. We stood up with Wendy Greuel and Valley business leaders to grant tax cuts for business. We stood up with President Garcetti behind a 12-to-2 building reform that will streamline City government and make it more transparent and accountable for everyone.

With our workforce development strategy, we are moving 100,000 LA-area residents into living-wage jobs. We've already placed 40,000 Angelenos – that's 40,000 families whose lives have been transformed. We've increased summer youth jobs from 4,000 in 2005 to 10,000 last year, and we're going to reach 15,000 kids in the coming summer as part of our gang strategy.

We are confronting the crisis of housing affordability. By fully funding the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, we've created and funded over 5,300 units of affordable rental housing in the City of LA.

We've made a renewed commitment to tackle the homeless problem and address the human tragedy on Skid Row. We lit up the night and put cops on the street. And violent crime on Skid Row is down 32 percent as a direct result of this compassionate effort providing police protection to the most vulnerable. At the same time, we've added emergency and transition shelter beds for the homeless and we invested more than \$100 million in permanent supportive housing for the chronically addicted and the mentally ill.

Together we have laid the foundation for a more prosperous future.

But, Angelenos, there is no escaping the truth.

We are going to be severely tested in this budget year.

So, we have come here today to the headquarters. We've come to Parker Center to say that it is time to focus Los Angeles on our central mission, to make clear our fundamental priority as a City.

Public safety is the first obligation of government. When you don't have safe streets, everything falls apart. People become isolated. Kids turn into prisoners. Jobs evaporate. Families struggle just to survive. Public safety is the foundation of everything we are trying to build in the City of the Angels.

Next week I will present a budget that will protect our core services of police and fire.

We cannot allow a temporary storm to blow us off course.

Our budget will fully fund our efforts to put 1,000 police officers on the street. And it will call for the consolidation of anti-gang programs in the Mayor's Office.

If we need any reminder of the critical nature of this mission, just consider what we suffered through during the first three months of this year.

In March, residents heard the echo of gunfire in Echo Park, and a 13-year-old boy lay dead. Shot picking lemons for the family dinner. His name was Anthony Escobar, and his death cheated every Angeleno. A young superstar destined for greatness was shot in cold blood just short of his front door. We all lost a son in Jamiel Shaw.

Cesar Martinez killed by a gang member as he walked down Hill Street. Craig Cooper murdered in a drive-by outside his apartment building. Ricardo Rivera shot for simply standing in his front yard.

In the last year, this Department and this Chief have shown what we can accomplish when we support the mission. By focusing intensively on the top eleven gangs, we helped to register a 26 percent reduction in gang murders citywide. But, you know, that is grim consolation to the families of the 216 human beings who last year lost their lives and the more than 1,300 Angelenos who were the victims of gang shootings.

Angelenos, we are all equal in the eyes of God. Every time an Angeleno is the victim of violence, we are all injured.

But I want to say something to the whole community tonight.

Crimes motivated by hate, by the color of a victim's skin, by heritage or language, by religion or belief, by gender or sexual orientation, do a special kind of violence.

They strike us at the heart. They seek to nullify who we are as Angelenos. They attack us at our point of greatest strength, which has always been found in our diversity and our difference. And they challenge the very idea that a city of four million, black and brown, Caucasian and Asian, Spanish and English, Muslim and Jewish, Sikh and Armenian Orthodox, can be one City.

I want you to know that I intend to lead an open dialogue in this City in the coming months – in the community, in the neighborhoods – working together with our clergy and civil rights leadership. I hope we can spread facts where they have been absent. I hope we can shed some light where the violence has been darkest. I hope that we can build confidence where there has been confusion.

I want you to know tonight: And I stand with Chief Bratton when I say, in the City of Los Angeles, we will prosecute any evidence of hate violence actively, aggressively and to the fullest extent of the law.

Angelenos, it's time to come together.

The budget I will submit next week will test our City leaders like never before.

With the national recession catching Los Angeles in its wake, we now face an estimated General Fund deficit of \$406 million.

This is the single biggest shortfall in our history. And it is going to test us.

It's going to challenge us to focus on our common mission, to pledge allegiance to the idea that we are One City, indivisible.

It will test our political will. It's going to stretch our creativity. It's going to require a commitment to shared sacrifice involving every member of our City Family.

We're going to need to demonstrate a new openness and a new willingness to break old, bad habits at City Hall. Like many departments, my office will be taking a five percent cut in our budget, and I want to commend President Garcetti and the Council Leadership who have stepped up and offered a five percent match. While I am at it, I want to thank our Controller and City Attorney in advance – I know that they too are eager to do their part.

But there's no denying: To balance our books, we're going to need to throw out the old political rulebooks. Our budget will propose moving parking and surplus property revenues into the General Fund for the general good – and the general protection – of Los Angeles. I know these monies have traditionally been the political province of the Council. But ladies and gentlemen, we know we can't solve this equation dividing by fifteen. It's time to find our highest common denominator.

And we are going to have to make tough choices regarding cuts and new fees. We are proposing the elimination of an estimated 767 civilian positions. We're challenging workers to step up and be a part of the solution. And we are asking the public to bear their share. Our budget will move the City to full cost recovery on fees. Developers will pay more at the counter. Residents will see an increase in their trash bills.

But I will promise the People of Los Angeles: in my budget proposal, for every dollar we generate in new fees, we are going to cut a buck fifty out of City government.

And we're going to lead deeper structural reforms at the same time. Our budget will build back the Reserve Fund. It will consolidate technology functions. We are cutting the back office and asking commissions to share administrative staff. For the first time, we're publishing performance measures for every department in the City. And working with General Managers, my office will be moving aggressively to implement a zero-based budget in the next fiscal year. The days for minor tune-ups and incremental fiscal adjustments are over. It is time to get under the hood and rebuild the engine of City government.

And to my esteemed colleagues on the Council, I say this: Crisis is the mother of opportunity, and I believe we have a unique opportunity in this budget.

I believe we have an opportunity to send a message far beyond our city limits.

We have a chance to rebuild a sacred trust with the public that has been broken so many times and in so many budget cycles in Sacramento and Washington.

We're going to show that it is possible to balance a tough budget like a family does.

We're going to show that we can pass a budget on time.

We're going to demonstrate that politicians can face a crisis without sacrificing the essential services people count on most.

We're going to make people see that a leaner government can be a more effective servant.

We're going to do it with an honest and responsible balance of cuts and new revenue.

It's true: we're going to ask more of our people – but we're going to prove the worth of their investment.

And nowhere – NOWHERE – is the need greater to focus our resources more wisely than in the fight against gang and gun violence.

In my last State of the City address, I introduced a citywide gang reduction and youth development strategy based on two fundamental principles:

First, the days are gone when there was a serious debate about prevention versus enforcement. To borrow a phrase from Tony Blair, we need to be both "tough on crime" and "tough on the root causes of crime."

That means insisting on a greater investment in both police resources and prevention and intervention.

It means getting cops and social workers together on the same page working as a team.

Second, we need to recognize that gangs are a localized phenomenon. They have turf.

And we can't address the problem citywide unless we concentrate where the problem lives, in the hotspots, in the neighborhoods where the manifestations of violence are the most severe.

In the last year, our place-based strategy showed clear results. In our five clear sites, gang crime was down more than double the city average.

Meanwhile, we've been hard at work laying the foundation for our prevention and intervention strategy.

We established an Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development in the Mayor's office, and I hired the Reverend Jeff Carr to oversee and coordinate all City gang prevention, intervention, and re-entry programs.

I learned one thing about Jeff Carr right away: He's a compassionate and hands-on leader. He's spent the last eight months on the streets. He's been behind the tape at practically every crime scene and present at nearly every community meeting. Jeff has been there by the sides of more victims' families than I would venture to count.

Meanwhile, we built a team. They've undertaken a systematic analysis of the specific problems and resources unique to each of our existing gang reduction zones. They've been mapping and modeling the whole city.

Today, based on this research and record of results, we are announcing our plans to expand the approach.

In response to Controller Chick's blueprint recommendations, my budget will provide for the transfer of the City's leading gang prevention and intervention programs into the Mayor's Gang Reduction and Youth Development Office.

Our plan calls for an expansion in the number of Gang Reduction Zones from 8 to 12.

It provides a nearly 70 percent increase in General Fund dollars for our Gang Reduction and Youth Development strategy.

By pooling citywide resources in a coordinated manner, we will invest \$1.5 million in prevention and intervention spending in each gang reduction zone.

In our second phase, we're going to aggressively tap the larger pool of City resources – from block grants to community centers.

I want to thank Controller Chick and Connie Rice for raising their voices and issuing the call to action.

I want to thank Councilmembers Cardenas and Hahn for their longstanding leadership on this issue.

We're going to have to come together from the Harbor to the Valley. It's is going to require our citywide commitment.

We're going to need to begin by engaging – and challenging – our Neighborhood Councils to assume a greater leadership role in the fight against gangs.

Many Neighborhood Councils are already leading the charge against graffiti. In the 13th district, they've set up block captains to “UN-tag” the community. They've cut the blight on businesses and schools in their area by more than 60 percent in one year.

We plan to tap into our community and faith-based organizations in a way we never have. They are the eyes and ears of the community. They are the City's most logical and trusted peacemakers.

Just consider the potential: Together, the more than 450 churches in the Florence-Graham zone in South LA alone represent tens of thousands of members who can be mobilized into action.

We're going to focus where kids and teenagers spend the bulk of their day: in and around school. Our Human Relations Commission will train teachers and principals in dealing with the realities of gang violence.

We're going to challenge community groups and grant-giving foundations to make elementary, middle, and high schools one-stop family resource centers, during the week and on weekends.

We're going to get the Recreation and Parks Department on the team. That means keeping our parks and recreation centers open – and bustling – as safe havens during the hours when our kids are most exposed: from 3 pm to midnight.

During a summer pilot project in 2003, Baldwin Village kept one single neighborhood park running with non-stop tutoring classes, basketball tournaments, and computer classes four days a week until 2 AM. Assaults dropped 20 percent. Violent crime fell 17 percent. And no homicides were registered that summer.

Round-the-clock programming works. But these programs can't just occur for nine weeks every five years in just one neighborhood.

Think about the magnitude of the challenge. Four years from now every school in LA will be on a one-track schedule, and we know what that means: A long hot summer.

Our goal is to keep one park in each gang reduction zone open until midnight four days a week every summer.

We are going to work with community leaders, law enforcement, gang intervention workers, and academic experts to establish a gang intervention academy that will professionally train the nonprofit staff working on the streets – and to give them another kind of street cred.

Our goal is to work with our partners in the County to create an individualized juvenile re-entry program that pairs kids leaving jail with a hands-on case manager from the community.

By focusing on health, on therapy and on family, we can begin to break a cycle that typically sees 70 percent of kids on parole rearrested within two years.

I assure you of this: We won't get everything right. We'll make mistakes. We'll try some things that fail.

But that won't keep us from swinging for the fences.

We'll measure what we do. We'll support what works. We will set clear public goals. And we'll open our books to the rigorous scrutiny of our Controller!

Angelenos: We won't address the gang problem or solve our budget crisis if we choose to dwell as we have so many times before on the narrow question of winners and losers.

The challenge to Angelenos is to give more of ourselves.

This June we will mark the 40th anniversary of the murder of Robert F. Kennedy at the Ambassador hotel on Wilshire Boulevard.

I know it seems like a lifetime ago. I can only imagine the calls that came into this building on that dark and terrible day.

But the fundamental challenges of leadership that Bobby Kennedy described in his time ring even truer four decades later.

He warned us against the danger of "futility; the belief there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills."

He asked us to resist the danger of "expediency; of those who say that hopes and beliefs must bend before immediate necessities."

He cautioned us against the danger of "timidity." And he described what is possible when we choose to see ourselves in terms of our connection to others.

"Few will have the greatness to bend history," he said, "but each of us can work to change a small portion of the events, and in the total of all these acts will be written the history of this generation."

Angelenos, let's imagine the horizon beyond our sight.

Let's reach for the future beyond our grasp. Let's do it as a family. Let's do it as a community. Let's do it as One City.

Thank you.

And God bless you all.

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