

Thank you, Ann, for that introduction. And thank you to everyone for gathering to be a part of this year's State of our City, the city of San Juan Capistrano.

Before I begin I would like to thank the Chamber of Commerce for partnering with the City on this annual event and for their wonderful work throughout the year. I particularly want to take the opportunity to thank City staff for their hard work and dedication. Without their energy, expertise and engineering of plans, the work that drives this City and moves it forward would not be possible. If they would not mind will our City employees please stand and Join me in thanking this amazing team. I would be remiss if I did not thank our City Council members that I am honored to serve with -- Mayor Pro Tem Pam Patterson; Council Member and former Mayor Sam Allevato; Council Member Kerry Ferguson; and our newest Council Member John Perry. Finally I must honor the 5 most critical people in San Juan – the spouses of our city councilmembers – James, Vicky, Stuart, Harriet and of course Jocelyn.

Now I ask, please raise your hand if 3 years ago, 2 years ago, even 1 year ago, you would have predicted Mayor Derek Reeve would be addressing you tonight at the state of our city. If you noticed I did not raise my hand and that is not just because I am disabled and I can't.

This past November our residents chose to make a significant change with regards to the direction of our city government. Some have argued this was a "radical change" of our Council, but I disagree. Aside from myself being named Mayor, we have welcomed three new Council members. Like Councils before it, this Council is based on leadership, integrity, perseverance, and -- most importantly -- community service. No matter what our backgrounds, our education, or our personal philosophies, we are here because San Juan Capistrano matters, because San Juan Capistrano is unique and special to us all.

The significant change this Council reflects is the renewed commitment to our town founders – a commitment to preserve the past while simultaneously embracing the future. In essence a commitment to go Back to the Future ...

"Back to the Future" is in fact the theme of this year's State of the City. When you hear that phrase, it is easy to think of the 1985 film that focused on characters who traveled to the past -- in a DeLorean - - and wanted to return to the present time. However, that is not what I am referring to. I am referring to going back to our past in order to capture our future. I will explain more as we go, but essentially "Back to the Future" means focusing on our traditions and not sacrificing our heritage. Only by doing this can we secure our future. Our history and culture is a gift of not just community pride but also of economic vitality that shall not be squandered. It's about honoring people and groups and organizations that are the fabric of San Juan Capistrano -- the Juanenos, the Mission San Juan Capistrano, the Historical Society, the Fiesta Association and many others ... while continuing to foster young leaders -- the next generation -- to carry on these traditions that make San Juan Capistrano so unique and, frankly, the envy of all other cities.

To make this happen, my colleagues and I over the next two years will focus on six Urgent Strategic Priorities. Strategic planning helps us to identify clear goals; guide decision making; approach planning in a holistic manner; establish team work; and foster an organizational culture of continuous improvement.

A strategic plan spells out where we want to go; how we are going to get there, and it helps us decide how and where to allocate resources, ensuring alignment to the strategic priorities and objectives.

Our priorities are economic development and creating a positive business culture; build and maintain a strong financial foundation for our public purse; manage Open Space to include more equestrian activity and Native American involvement; improve transportation; implement the Historic Town Center Master Plan; and strengthen public safety.

When it comes to economic development and creating a positive business culture, we have already begun reviewing ordinances for streamlining business development with our focus on making San Juan Capistrano a true destination for businesses and tourists alike. This can and will be accomplished in harmony with our culture and heritage as expressed with in the goals and policies of the City's General Plan and architectural design guidelines.

Vast Open Space has long set our City apart from any other Orange County city, and we will continue to embrace our equestrian community by focusing on the north-south connection on Ortega Highway and connecting the east and west sides of town. An essence of this town is our Native American heritage, which must be celebrated and continually embraced. In our Northwest Open Space, we will look at an animal adoption center and passive natural park.

More good news includes the fact that we are building on our strong financial foundation. We have proactive opportunities with our pension obligations and our Ground Water Recovery Plant. With the plant, we have established a Mayoral Subcommittee and are looking at consolidation interests, a reliability analysis, meeting with the Basin Authority and weighing alternatives to the Ground Water Recovery Plant.

We continue to move forward with our Historic Town Center Master Plan, including the beautification of Ortega Highway and Camino Capistrano; the curatorship of the Blas Aguilar Adobe; and a parking structure pilot program. This master plan preserves the Egan House and includes parking incentives, a shopping corridor and -- most importantly --, bringing new business to town and extending the downtown area.

As you know, there has been much debate about the future as it pertains to our historic downtown. Well, I am here to tell you that it's not about future business vitality versus historic preservation. It's not one versus the other -- they are not mutually exclusive. Both complement and in fact depend on each other.

In the area of transportation, we will evaluate our street system, and resurface our roads. We have anguished yet made much progress to I-5/Ortega Highway gateway. In the future, we will see the development of the La Pata Gateway and Camino Capistrano/Las Ramblas Gateway and other congestion-relief projects. We are also looking at trolley service to optimize outlying parking areas and special events use and connect our City's amenities.

As you know, nothing is more important to a community than public safety, and I am happy to report that San Juan Capistrano continues to be one of the safest cities around. We are fortunate to have an outstanding Police Services Department staffed by dedicated Sheriff's employees and senior volunteers who watch over our community and keep it safe. We recently welcomed a new Chief of Police Lt. Scott Spalding, who comes to our City with a wealth of law enforcement experience, having joined the Sheriff's Department in 1987.

Ladies and gentlemen, along with our Strategic Urgent Priorities, we continue to be a place where the future leaders of San Juan Capistrano come to learn, play and grow into successful adults. You see San Juan isn't just the sum of its structures and buildings;

San Juan is a spirit, an attitude, a passion. Today, San Juan Capistrano is robust because our spirit embodied in our residents is strong: This spirit is exemplified in community Partnerships: between the City, business; nonprofit organizations; Churches; and our local schools; all are integral to reaching our goals. Our schools, Churches, recreation programs, businesses and community organizations all complement our history and our very core. In the following video, you will get a sense of what this City is made of and where we are heading. Now I have been advised to inform you that this video has a touch of my personality and sense of humor – you might say my version of the reanimation of San Juan -- So My fellow residents welcome Back to the Future.

(Voice over and video rolls)

Thank you to everyone who participated in our video.

My fellow residents tonight, you have seen a glimpse of this special town that we are proud to call home. When people look at San Juan Capistrano, they see a thriving and passionate populace just beginning to tap our potential. They see the beauty of our parks and open space, the richness of our culture and the vibrancy of our past.

San Juan Capistrano stands strong today and the state of our city is strong. The commitments that we have made to our children, to our families, to our residents and to our businesses are solidly embedded in the passion we have for the spirit that is San Juan. A spirit that will forever take us Back to San Juan's Future.

Thank you all for being a part of San Juan; may God bless you and may God bless San Juan Capistrano.