

STATE OF THE CITY A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

Speechwriter: Richard Bellikoff

Thank you, David, for your kind introduction.

At the start of the 21st century, we envision growth, prosperity and vitality for the central city. We see a tomorrow where Los Angeles becomes the focal point of the Pacific rim. We know the leadership role of this organization has gone a long way toward making these visions a reality.

But we also know we can't rest on our laurels. If the renaissance of Los Angeles is to continue, we must take the initiative and plan for it. We must set our priorities, state our objectives, and then meet them.

The Central City Association's business plan for the coming years addresses these needs.

It targets four basic objectives—in transportation, economic development, community development, and corporate operations. I'd like to briefly review each of these.

(Pause)

First, transportation.

Mobility has always been a key factor in the success of Los Angeles. But over the years, the image of the footloose freeway driver has given way to gridlock.

Everyone who works in the central city experiences transportation problems on a daily basis. Traffic jams, noise, and air pollution are the curse of the commuter.

But business and population growth don't have to produce traffic growth. There's no reason for every single employee to drive to work—not while other options are available.

Metro Rail, Metro Link and DASH are steps in the right direction, but they're far from the only ones.

We intend to establish a transportation management organization as a CCA subsidiary. It will promote ride sharing, van pooling, and public transportation. Employers and employees need to be educated about the benefits of using alternative commuting methods.

We also plan to work with government agencies to develop a comprehensive plan for increasing both mobility within the central city and access to it. It will include such advanced technology as computerized signalization—better known as “smart roads.”

Our airports and water ports are not, of course, part of the central city. But they greatly contribute to its economic engine—as the gateways for regional, national and international trade and tourism.

CCA supports airport terminal modernization—not just at Los Angeles International Airport, but also Burbank, Long Beach, Ontario and John Wayne airports.

We’re also backing redevelopment plans for the Port of Los Angeles, to strengthen its position as the largest and most active seaport on the West coast.

Implementing all these transportation strategies will improve the productivity of workers in the central city, and get downtown moving again.

(Pause)

Our second objective is the continued economic health and development of the central city.

Our business plan calls for establishing of a promotional arm of the CCA.

It will launch an advertising and public relations campaign promoting the central city as a world-class location for corporate or regional headquarters of major companies. We also need to attract more entrepreneurial ventures to the downtown area.

To establish the central city as a center of commerce and employment for the region, we must create a business-friendly environment that encourages development and investment. The focus should be on streamlined regulations, along with tax incentives, rather than government mandates.

We must also build upon the central city’s existing assets, by redeveloping under-utilized land and commercial buildings into mixed-use projects and housing. We intend to work with the mayor’s blue ribbon committee to update the city’s redevelopment plans.

This kind of investment in downtown enhances revenue streams. It increases employment and broadens the tax base. It benefits everyone who works or lives in the central city — because, as we all know, a rising tide lifts all boats.

Despite vast improvements in recent years, perceptions and stereotypes persist of the central city as a “ghost town” after dark. “There is no there there,” as Gertrude Stein said. We must combat the image of Los Angeles as a decentralized urban sprawl.

With our support, downtown has been re-inventing itself as a vibrant, multi-use urban activity center.

It's become a pedestrian-friendly environment shared by residents, workers and visitors. People are getting out of their cars and into the streets.

Our central city is now a destination for shoppers and tourists—a place where business, government, entertainment, art, and culture intersect.

This is an amazing transformation. Nobody could have dreamed of such a scenario just a few years ago.

(Pause)

Hand in hand with economic development goes community development. And that's the third objective of our business plan.

The residents of the central city community run the gamut—from those who choose to live here, to those unfortunates who live on the streets.

For all of the central city's residents, quality of life is a 24-hour concern.

Maintaining the cleanliness of city streets should be part of an overall campaign of beautification. We must eliminate blight and deterioration and maintain a strong infrastructure to support the community.

To help accomplish this, we propose to establish a city infrastructure task force. This group will recommend improvements needed to continue the growth and vitality of the central city community.

If we really want to promote downtown Los Angeles as a great place to live, work, and do business, we must also address the issue of safety. An attractive urban lifestyle is a safe one.

Working with the Los Angeles police department and private security forces will help us improve the levels of personal safety and business security.

We need to find solutions for the continuing problem of homelessness, and put an end to the criminal activity of those who prey on the homeless.

CCA's advocacy is also aimed at increasing the city's supply of affordable housing—along with creating more open and green space, to make it more livable. CCA is moving forward with a set of legislative and regulatory proposals that will change the way these spaces are financed.

We can already see the results of all these efforts: vital, energized neighborhoods where residents enjoy retail businesses, restaurants and entertainment venues. Downtown Los Angeles is once again becoming a desirable place to live.

(Pause)

Last but not least, the fourth objective of our business plan: corporate operations. This means continuing to advocate for the interests of CCA members in the areas of public policy, legislation and regulation.

We are the voice of the business community at the city, county and state levels of government. We build public-private partnerships that have a major impact on Los Angeles.

The CCA needs to create a political action committee for our public advocacy efforts. It should promote the election of candidates who support our free enterprise policies.

We must continue to provide our members with high quality services, oriented towards growth and prosperity. This year, to serve our membership better, three new area task forces will be formed. They'll cover the Western, Eastern, and Southern sectors of the central city.

These groups will address the concerns of members in those areas. They'll interact with government on planning issues and delivery of public services. And they'll coordinate with the private sector to develop a consensus on policy issues.

Since any organization is only as effective as its membership, we also plan to intensify our membership development efforts.

One element will be the creation of a definitive cost-benefit analysis of becoming a CCA member. Prospective members sometimes wonder what they get for all those dues they're being asked to pay. Well, consider this: last year, we were successful in deferring 20 million dollars of Metro Rail tax assessments for our members. Some members saved as much as 1.5 million dollars. Since the maximum dues are \$15,000, that constitutes a 10,000% return on investment. This is a figure we would all be quite happy with in our businesses.

(Pause)

As you can see, our business plan for the coming years is very ambitious. But that's as it should be. A cardinal rule of life is that the higher your aspiration level, the higher your achievement level. Or as Zig Ziglar likes to say, "It's your attitude that determines your altitude."

For the future of downtown Los Angeles, the sky's the limit.

The Central City Association will remain the driving force for that future. We will continue to guide and shape the resurgence of the central city.

We must maintain our pivotal role—bringing business, government, cultural institutions and citizens together to find win-win solutions that achieve our common objectives.

We are committed to helping the central city achieve its full potential as a great place to live, work and visit.

Our ultimate goal is the establishment of downtown Los Angeles as the economic and cultural center of the region.

Accomplishing all this will require a sustained day-to-day effort of volunteers, staff, and members.

I look forward to a working partnership with all of you.