

## 11<sup>th</sup> Annual State of the City Address

Mayor Steven Detrick

March 25, 2011

Good afternoon and welcome. To each and every one of you in this room and to those of you watching at work or at home, thank you for caring about this great City. It is an honor and privilege to serve as Mayor of the City of Elk Grove, and to have the opportunity to deliver this annual message.

We are a City that is mourning together. We mourn the loss of an innocent life, gunned down on our street. We mourn for the family of Surinder Singh. I know our Council, and our entire Police Department share my strong commitment to ensuring that those responsible will be brought to Justice. It is comforting to recognize that through this difficult time, we have seen just how strong we are as a community; how we won't let those who live by hate take who we are away from us.

Our strength as a community is evident in everything we do. It's an important part of who we are.

And this day has become an important tradition in the life of our young and vibrant City. It's our opportunity to pause and reflect on our accomplishments and where we could have done better; an opportunity to look to the future and consider where we're going. It encourages us – as it has for our nation for more than two centuries – to answer the question, “What is the state of our City?”

Although we've walked through one of the more challenging periods in our City's history – with an economic realignment, new mandates from the legislature and fundamental changes in local government finance – we're making it through. We've taken lessons from the past and gotten back to basics. In our homes, in our workplaces and inside City Hall, we've simplified and learned to do more with less. We're the young Marine fresh out of boot camp – we're leaner and meaner and we're oriented toward action. Just as the awareness campaign we launched in October says, we really did rethink our priorities.

90 days into the new year, we're seeing improvement. The Federal Reserve is predicting growth, and the banks are lending money again. Steel beams are once again rising from fallow ground as many sectors of the local economy begin to reinvest, to rebuild and to grow.

I'm very proud to report that the state of our City is receptive and open to new ideas. Today, we are resilient and stronger from the challenges we've faced together. We've embarked on this 11<sup>th</sup> year of Cityhood with a clear focus on creating new jobs for our residents, continually improving public safety, and promoting transparency in our governing.

As we look to the future, job creation remains our number one priority. And as we look all around Elk Grove, we're seeing more than just glimmers of hope.

Just last year, Kaiser broke ground on a new, \$38 million, 65,000 square foot facility on Promenade Parkway. By late this year, the new facility will offer services for the mind, body and spirit. With more than half of our population served by Kaiser, this is a boon not just to our economic health but to our physical health as well.

Mercy is also making a significant investment in our community. They've broken ground on a new facility at the western edge of our future civic center site that will one day soon serve as a community hospital. On the horizon, Sutter Health has plans to expand in Elk Grove – adding medical office buildings and another new hospital.

Renewed economic investment isn't limited to the healthcare sector. New dealerships for Kia, Subaru and the rebirth of Ford at the Elk Grove Automall each sends a powerful signal that the automotive industry is transforming itself and moving forward, and is proof that they believe in the incredible potential that is Elk Grove.

It's encouraging to witness once vacant buildings being given new life. The former Circuit City has been filled by Henry's Fresh Market – their first Northern California store, and it's right here in Elk Grove. The former Mervyn's Department Store has been filled with a Burlington Coat Factory. We're filling vacant buildings, giving residents new opportunities, and we'll all reap the benefits of keeping more sales tax dollars local.

To be sure, some of this investment is happening because of our unique demographics that make Elk Grove pencil out for retail, health and other commercial projects. Our City is family-oriented with safe neighborhoods, more than 150,000 people and a high median income. But that's not the whole story.

You see, when we were rethinking our priorities, we realized that we had some work to do. And so we have.

We created a program that allows qualified projects to defer development fees for up to five years, interest free for the first three.

We heard that our development impact fees were too high to attract the kind of job creators we were looking for – so we slashed the fees by more than 30 percent. It's the first time we've done that in Elk Grove, and it's the largest reduction in the region.

We created an Economic Development Review Team that gets interested parties involved and provides direct oversight of development projects.

We're offering a sewer fee credit program, too – as much as a 90 percent reduction in sewer fees to businesses creating new jobs.

We formed an Industry Working Group, bringing together representatives from homebuilding, engineering and commercial development to make sure we stay on the right track and that we're making the right changes to make us truly competitive.

Our goal is to make it as easy as possible on those who will create new jobs for our residents. And we've appointed a designated staff person to make sure that happens. The new Economic Development Coordinator is responsible for working directly with new and existing businesses, to walk them through our application processes until they open their doors.

Think of it as concierge service at City Hall.

We're plugging in smart, user-friendly technology that gives businesses 'round-the-clock access to City Hall when they need it. Take e-plan, for example. Building permit customers can now submit, review and track their projects on-line, on their own schedule, reducing paper and reducing turnaround times. Or the wide variety of on-line services for residents and businesses alike – everything from utility billing and GIS mapping to code enforcement and business licenses.

We're bringing City Hall to our residents and customers, instead of the other way around.

We have an Economic Development Incentive Program targeting potential employers as well. Those who create 20 or more jobs generating salaries greater than \$51,000 are eligible. So are those who generate \$15 million in taxable sales, or reuse an existing vacant building, or move into Old Town. The rewards are significant – we reap the benefits of local jobs and tax revenue, and the employers can benefit from fee reductions, grants, project coordination and expedited plan reviews.

We've finished our Market Study, and this year, we'll use the valuable information we've gleaned and put it to work as we reach out to key sectors – including state government. We're already reaching out aggressively to the state's Department of General Services to make sure they know how much we have to offer. We'll use the same aggressive efforts as we reach out to major employers in other sectors.

We also recognize the importance of small business in our economy, and how their needs differ from major employers. This year, we'll publish a comprehensive guide to opening a small business in the City of Elk Grove.

We continue to encourage residents to Shop Local – it's always the right choice when you consider the fact that it creates jobs, supports local businesses and results in tax dollars staying in our community, funding our programs like public safety. During the holidays, we joined with our community partners to offer incentives – gift cards, an iPod, even a \$2000 grand prize to encourage our residents to Shop Elk Grove. If you haven't yet had a chance to visit our "Think, Shop, Live" program website, I'd encourage you to do so.

We're making significant changes, and we're working hard to change perceptions at the same time. We launched our regional awareness campaign in October that details all these changes. We advertised in regional publications, we sent postcards out to more than 7,500 decision makers in business and shared our good news. And our redesigned website is showing the results – we're seeing a very real increase in the number of inquiries to our Economic Development Coordinator. We're proud to report that a pharmacy school and medical school are considering establishing a campus in Elk Grove and are currently in escrow on the vacant, 100,000 square foot facility that once housed AAA.

Yes, we heard loud and clear that the way we were doing business before just wasn't working – it wasn't keeping us competitive. Today, we're changing perceptions and turning frustration and complaints into success stories. We're sending the message that we're not just open for business, we're hungry for new business, for new jobs and we're willing to work for both.

We've been able to make so many of these changes because we're not in the same financial position faced by so many other local governments. Our fiscal prudence has paid off, and we have in place a balanced and healthy budget that doesn't sacrifice service levels.

We're watching as the state of California goes through a major realignment – a fundamental shift in local government finance the likes of which hasn't been seen in 35 years. We can't yet predict what the outcome will be, but we do know that the City of Elk Grove has prepared for it.

We're in a good spot in no small part because we took the budget directly to the people, and we got the necessary input to make decisions based on what services were needed, how they were being delivered, what we needed to cut and what we needed to protect. Our balanced budget brings with it a balanced approach – we continued a reduction in operating expenses, suspended components of employee compensation, and we used one-time resources on a limited basis. Even through the economic downturn, we've been able to maintain a strong reserve.

Our efforts earned us the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for our budget from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. Our fiscal prudence earned us an upgrade in our bond rating from Standard & Poor's – from an A to an A+. That creates new opportunities for us to save taxpayers' money by reducing the cost of borrowing money.

We've also worked hard to make sure that a down economy didn't impede the genuine progress we're making in creating a stronger and more tightly connected community.

We've selected a world-renowned architect to take the community's vision for a new civic center complex and create something truly timeless. This state-of-the-art complex will feature a library and community center, a children's discovery center and Veterans Hall, a commercial development complex,

government facilities, beautifully landscaped open space and sports facilities. When complete, this new complex will be a bustling center of activity and a unique place for the community to come together. That's why public outreach has been so critical and really at the heart of this project. We've reached out and we've been given tremendous input on how this Civic Center can best serve Elk Grove. In the end, I'm confident it will.

I don't need to tell you that Old Town Elk Grove is a real jewel for our community. We're protecting our history with the Old Town Special Planning Area, ensuring that we protect this important part of our proud heritage for future generations. We've been honored as a Preserve America Community for that dedication – but we're not stopping there. We're encouraging today's generations to visit Old Town – to shop and to step back to a simpler time. This past summer, we dedicated a new parking lot with enough room for 40 cars. We've helped kick off "Old Town First Fridays," inviting residents and visitors alike to set aside the first Friday evening of the month to enjoy live music and art displays as they shop and dine in Old Town.

We're drawing thousands of people each summer to celebrate our nation's birthday together with the Salute to the Red, White and Blue. More than just fireworks, this event has become a much anticipated annual celebration, and reminder of what a close-knit community Elk Grove is. We're proud the City could continue this time-honored community tradition. It's a true public private partnership, with so many of our local businesses participating in and helping to finance the fun.

The new Civic Center, how we're protecting and supporting Old Town, and these wonderful new traditions are all signs of how we're growing as a community.

And, as we grow, we're taking special care to ensure that the environment around us is protected as well. We're working hard to create a greener Elk Grove. This past year, we reached out to the community as we developed a Climate Action Plan and Sustainability Element for our General Plan Update. We're focused not only on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but on improving community health and air quality while making energy efficiency a part of our daily lives.

We're taking that seriously at City Hall, too, as we've reduced our energy consumption by more than 6 percent in the past year. We've also added a preference for recycled and sustainable products. For new

development in the City, we're asking our corporate neighbors to make sure alternative modes of transportation are considered, and that landscaping is planned for water efficiency. Moving forward, we're making sure that road and landscape improvements meet the same standards we're asking of private development.

As motor vehicle use is one of the larger contributors to air pollution, we're challenging our local transit system to be even more user friendly and to reduce our reliance on gasoline and diesel. e-tran has been a leader in pursuing more park-and-ride lots, adding bus shelters for inclement weather, and expanding the service to help pull more single occupancy vehicles off the road. We're taking it the next step, too, by using a fleet of Compressed Natural Gas buses that run cleaner than the older technology diesel fleet.

Yes, the past year has been marked by progress, prudence and thoughtful planning toward our future. The year ahead promises to be even greater.

Now I know you can't be here today and not wonder what's going on with the mall. Unfortunately today I don't have a definitive answer for you and an opening date is yet to be determined. Given the level of investment already at the site, retail consultants have expressed confidence the mall will be one day be completed.

We do know that the level of investment already here is significant, and the area is ripe with economic development opportunities. As you can see, we have the beautiful new Grant Line Interchange, which provides safer freeway access, improves traffic flow, and promotes mobility and access to existing and future businesses in the southern part of the City. It's part of our plan to develop gateways that welcome residents home and visitors into our City. The City is also seeing more and more building permits pulled in the Laguna Ridge/Madeira development and we're talking to landowners every day.

Our Integrated Waste Management Department has been both hard at work and innovative – and their efforts are winning wide praise and recognition.

A Hazardous Waste Facility is on track to accept paints, batteries and old pesticides locally by 2013 – a project that's being funded through Recovery Zone economic development bonds and three different grants. We've also updated the Municipal Code to create new programs that encourage recycling at

businesses and apartment complexes, reducing construction and demolition debris, and streamlining our utility billing. The integrated waste team received national recognition last year for their innovative program that keeps dangerous medical sharps like needles out of the normal waste stream – with no cost to our residents.

In the year ahead, we'll see updates to our Tree Ordinance, furthering our commitment to the energy savings and quality of life provided by a lush and green canopy of trees.

We're also updating the bicycle and pedestrian master plan, which is already succeeding in making the community more interconnected for alternative transportation, while making safe, healthy and affordable exercise a reality.

We've made great strides in building and reinvesting in our infrastructure – completing 16 projects totaling \$92 million in infrastructure improvement. We've rebuilt the Sheldon Road Interchange, significantly improving the flow of traffic and commerce, and creating a far safer situation for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians alike.

We've seen capacity improvements come together at the Franklin Boulevard/Elk Grove Boulevard intersection. We've consolidated landscaping efforts between the City and the Cosumnes CSD, and made much needed traffic and safety improvements at the Franklin Crossing Subdivision. Throughout the City of Elk Grove, we've made improvements to protect the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists, and made maintenance a priority to protect the life of existing infrastructure investments.

Perhaps the most important investment any City can make is in the safety of its citizens.

I'm very pleased to report that the Elk Grove Police Department continues to provide the kind of service we envisioned when the City decided to create its own police department.

In 2010, the number of violent crimes in Elk Grove dropped 11 percent. The total number of property crimes dropped more than 6 percent.

The total number of calls continued their modest decline, dropping 4 percent in 2010. Crime-related calls declined as well – 11 percent fewer for violent crimes and 7 percent for property crimes.

We have a Chief of Police who is firmly committed to “Job One” – a department that is responsive to emergency calls for service – and responding to those calls in less than five minutes.

This department and this Council are also committed to community policing, with a focus on youth safety issues and a strong sex offender ordinance. We’ve given the department the tools they need to keep our citizens safe, and they’re quite effectively using those tools.

The City Council also adopted a marijuana dispensary prohibition, keeping this activity – and the negative effects associated with it – from taking root in our community. We’ll focus this year on other creative ways the City can partner with our citizens to improve the safety and livability of our community.

And, we’ll have a little more help doing it. The City of Elk Grove was awarded a Federal “Community Oriented Policing” grant of more than \$2 million to hire six additional police officers – six officers, some of whom have already started their training. The rest will be on board by the end of this month, and all will be fully trained and added to the patrol force by summer.

These encouraging numbers and this bold approach bode well for the safety of our community this year, and speak volumes about the caliber of the men and women of the Elk Grove Police Department and those who lead them.

We’re cleaning up our streets in other ways, too.

Our code enforcement team will grow their numbers this year by expanding their use of volunteers. Those volunteers will go a long way toward improving response to graffiti, illegal dumping, illegal signs and abandoned shopping carts.

Code enforcement continues to improve our quality of life with their timely response, proactive approach and their recognition that code enforcement isn’t a 9 to 5 job. In this time when so many

homes are vacant from abandonment and foreclosure, they've done yeoman's work in ensuring that we know which properties require special attention.

Our City today is transparent and accessible. We're building a reputation as a City that is receptive to new ideas and a City that responds with action. We've reached out regularly to residents for input, and we're hearing that they support the work we're doing and they believe in the progress we're making.

Last November gave telling evidence. Measure J – the Utility User Tax – recognizes the changes in the way we communicate with one another, and ensures that all ratepayers are treated equally, regardless of the technology they use. Overwhelmingly, Elk Grove voters supported the change. We asked voters if they wanted to directly elect its Mayor. Again, overwhelmingly they said yes.

We're reaching out using new technology to keep residents informed and engaged. Beyond our online services capability, we're giving residents the ability to stay up to speed on City activities and actions through email and text alerts, social media and through our website.

Have you "friended" the City of Elk Grove on Facebook yet?

Our continued focus on technology means that public records and public information will become more and more accessible as we "continue to find the means to place information in the hands of citizens." We're providing greater public notification, being more responsive to requests, and even providing public access kiosks. Through "Ask Elk Grove," we've implemented a new customer service program that connects residents with specially-trained customer service representatives ready to assist with non-emergency City service requests – a single point of contact for all non-emergency services.

That's real progress toward our goal of service that is second to none.

Yes, as we look around Elk Grove, we see more than just glimmers of hope. We see very real and tangible progress.

We see that progress in no small part because we're listening. We're listening to residents, to our local businesses, and to those who will create the jobs that will pull our region out of economic uncertainty and into a period of sustained economic growth.

We're being receptive to what we learn from listening and from that, we're taking action. We built a balanced budget without sacrificing the services our residents told us they need. We rejected the garden-variety economic development program and created one that is and will continue to deliver on its mission. We've grown a police department that is a true partner with the community it serves.

We're being transparent and earning trust. We're debating our future honestly and openly while making access to public information easier than ever before.

We've changed, and grown and matured as a City. As we continue to be transparent, receptive and geared toward action, I'm more confident than ever before that these glimmers of hope reveal the promise of a very bright future for the City of Elk Grove.

###