



**Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer  
State of the City  
Prepared Remarks  
Wednesday, January 14, 2015**

Good evening, San Diego.

Bienvenidos a todos.

Thank you.

Honorable members of the City Council, City Attorney Goldsmith, appointed-and-elected officials from across the region and my fellow San Diegans, it's great to be here with you tonight.

To my wife, Katherine, and our children Jack and Lauren, I wouldn't be here if it weren't for your love and support.

I'm excited that we live in a city of opportunity.

Never before has there been so much promise for our future.

After a decade of crises and crashes, San Diego is writing its comeback story and each of us has a line to contribute.

More than any time over the last generation, San Diego is leading.

You cannot find another place on the planet where culture, commerce and creativity come together like they do here.

Every day we're presented with unlimited opportunities.

Tonight, I want to speak with you about how we spread these opportunities to every neighborhood.

To mothers and fathers, working hard to build a better life for their children.

To military veterans, transitioning into civilian life.

To people who come here from around the world, hoping to fulfill their dreams.

To entrepreneurs and innovators risking it all to improve the way we live.

Over the last year, I've seen progress in every neighborhood that proves we're on the right track.

My fellow San Diegans, the state of our city is strong and getting stronger.

We came together last year as One San Diego.

Tonight, I share with you how we did it and how we move together this year toward greater opportunities.

10 months ago, I came into office with a clear mission:

To put our neighborhoods first.

My "One San Diego" budget prioritized the services that matter to San Diego families, establishing fertile ground upon which our communities can thrive.

We directed more money toward streets, parks and public safety – bringing opportunity to every San Diego community.

When I ran for mayor, I promised to dedicate half of all major revenue growth to efforts to repair our aging infrastructure and neighborhoods.

That's exactly what I did – and as your Mayor, it's exactly what I'll do every single year.

Over the next five years, that's almost 100 million dollars for our neighborhoods.

I also pledged to bring more equality to neighborhood services.

When you call 9-1-1, you may have to wait longer for help if you live in certain communities.

That's not right.

I'm committed to tackling this inequality.

Working together with Public Safety Committee Chair Marti Emerald and Councilmembers David Alvarez and Myrtle Cole, we launched innovative new programs that brought major progress this past year.

In San Ysidro, ambulance help is arriving a full minute faster than before.

In Skyline, we're opening a temporary fire station to immediately improve emergency service.

In Encanto, we boosted fire-rescue response by three minutes.

And we're enacting a plan to build five new fire stations over the next five years.

We can always count on San Diego's first responders and active-duty military in times of crisis.

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge these heroes.

To every man and woman who is proudly serving in our armed forces, and to every veteran who has served, I thank you for your steadfast commitment to protecting our nation.

Under the leadership of Fire Chief Javier Mainar, San Diego's firefighters demonstrate exceptional courage and valor every day.

Their dedication was on display during the wildfires last May, where their heroism didn't stop at city limits.

San Diego firefighters answered the call to work with emergency personnel from across the region to extinguish fires throughout the county.

San Diego firefighters, we are thankful and grateful for your service.

When emergencies strike, experience matters.

That's why I chose a 30-year veteran to lead our police department, Shelley Zimmerman, making her the first female police chief in the history of San Diego.

And what a job she's doing.

San Diego deserves the very best.

And Chief Zimmerman knows that only the very best deserve to be San Diego police officers.

As police departments and communities across the country struggle with the very real issues of race and social inequality, our San Diego Police Department is becoming a shining example of community partnership and accountability.

Working with Chief Zimmerman and City Attorney Jan Goldsmith, we currently have 600 patrol officers wearing body cameras, making us the largest city in the nation with this many cameras in use.

This technology protects both the officers who use it, and the civil liberties of the public they serve.

It's a bold initiative that other cities are now following.

San Diego police officers, we thank for your service.

You have a mayor that stands with you.

Yet we must solve a recruitment and retention crisis that has left us with fewer officers to protect our community.

We are tackling this head on.

Last November I proposed increasing officer compensation to make it more competitive with other agencies.

We must hold on to our seasoned veterans and attract new officers so that San Diego remains one of the safest big cities in the nation.

We will keep these brave men and women right here in the City of San Diego.

We are making progress to bring opportunity to every neighborhood.

That's why I'm proud that civic leaders came together to create the new "One San Diego" nonprofit.

This group complements the City's neighborhood revitalization efforts.

By organizing community cleanups, and providing grants to improve the lives of San Diego's youth, One San Diego will join me in ensuring that no neighborhood is left behind.

When we work collaboratively, there's no limit to what we can accomplish.

We can create opportunities – and overcome challenges – by bringing everyone to the table.

My philosophy is that if you treat people with dignity and respect you can always find solutions.

It doesn't matter whether you're a Democrat, Republican or independent.

As your Mayor, my decisions will always be based on what's best for San Diego.

As we're forging stronger bonds within our own communities, we're also strengthening our ties with our neighbors in Baja California.

We reached a major milestone, to help transform the San Diego-Tijuana border from a lost economic opportunity into a competitive advantage that is the envy of the world.

Working with a broad coalition, the Regional Chamber and our congressional delegation, we secured the final two-hundred and sixteen million dollars in federal funding needed to complete the expansion of the San Ysidro Port of Entry.

This expansion will be a huge economic driver for our region while making the border more efficient, effective and secure.

And we've made great progress.

I'm happy to say that border wait times have already been cut in half.

This past November, I joined my friend, Tijuana Mayor Jorge Astiazaran, to sign the first cooperative agreement between our cities in 10 years.

Starting this year, San Diego and Tijuana will now host regular meetings to strengthen coordination on issues including economic development, technology and environmental protection.

Mayor Astiazaran is here with us tonight.

Mayor, I appreciate your partnership and friendship as we work together not as two cities, but as one region.

Para toda nuestra delegación mexicana, estamos unidos por nuestra cultura y economía.

Vamos a seguir trabajando juntos para crear oportunidades para mejorar las vidas de nuestros residentes en ambos lados de la frontera.

Nuestro Congreso regresa a trabajar este mes, voy a seguir apoyando una reforma migratoria integral.

Es importante y tenemos que hacer esto por nuestras familias, para nuestra economía y para nuestra región!

I will continue to support efforts to overhaul our broken immigration system and pass comprehensive immigration reform that will benefit San Diego!

We will continue to embrace bold ideas to expand opportunity.

A prime example is the new course we're setting to help get homeless families and veterans off the streets for good.

For years, San Diego has cared for our homeless citizens by putting up temporary tents in Barrio Logan and Midway during the winter months.

That's not good enough.

Not even close.

We need a permanent, year-round solution.

This year, our goal is to have an indoor care center – providing shelter and services for 350 homeless men and women, especially our veterans.

And it will be available every single night of the year.

It's the right thing to do.

San Diegans deserve more than a temporary tent when it's cold outside.

Ladies and gentlemen, we can do better – and we will.

We are raising the bar to make a better San Diego, both today and tomorrow.

Our community rallied to plan a celebration of Balboa Park's centennial and to make major investments to sustain this vibrant hub of arts and culture for its next century.

On January 1st, we kicked off a celebration that gives San Diegans even more reasons to fall in love with Balboa Park all over again.

We're restoring our crown jewel by enhancing public art, doubling the park's free Wi-Fi network and celebrating the newly-opened California Tower.

Please join me in thanking the countless organizations, institutions and volunteers who come together every day to preserve Balboa Park so our grandchildren can love it tomorrow as much as we do today.

Our world-class parks and natural resources must be preserved for future generations.

I recently brought together environmental and business groups to release a Climate Action Plan to protect our environment and over the next 20 years, eliminate half of all greenhouse gas emissions in San Diego!

Working with Councilmember Todd Gloria, whose partnership and leadership were instrumental, I will present the plan to the City Council this year.

It will help us improve public health and create green jobs by moving San Diego toward a goal of 100 percent renewable energy.

We will secure a cleaner future for our children and make San Diego one of the green-energy capitals of the world!

Our spirit of sustainability will help get us through California's historic ongoing drought – and record breaking heat we had this year.

San Diegans have stepped up and reduced water usage.

But due to limited supplies, the possibility of state-mandated water cuts is a reality.

So we must continue to conserve.

The good news is that with every challenge comes opportunity.

Recently I presented to the City Council the ambitious Pure Water program that will help make progress toward our city's water independence.

Thanks to the Council's unanimous approval, we are on track to have a safe, cost effective, and drought-proof water supply that will provide one-third of our local water needs by 2035.

It's a visionary solution that helps us overcome a monumental challenge.

And we will get it done.

We're creating a sustainable tomorrow for our children.

Both environmentally and financially.

Voters have given City leaders the tools and support to rein in the out-of-control spending that once pushed our city to the brink of bankruptcy.

Now, we're starting to use the savings from these reforms on services that improve our neighborhoods and our quality of life.

We've come so far.

So tonight I say this plainly to every San Diegan: As long as I'm your Mayor, I will never allow this city to repeat the financial mistakes of the past.

I look forward to working with the Council, in particular Audit Committee Chair Scott Sherman and Councilmember Chris Cate, to continue to build on these reforms.

The voters expect the City to deliver neighborhood services efficiently and effectively.

So they gave us managed competition – allowing the private and public sectors to compete to see which could provide the best possible service.

While the program has identified nine million dollars in annual savings, we can streamline it to save even more.

Due to a complex process, it currently takes an average of nearly 30 months – two and a half years – to complete and implement a winning bid.

It's unacceptable that the process to identify efficiencies is itself inefficient.

I will be proposing sweeping revisions in the coming weeks.

We will make the program faster, more equitable and more effective.

Competition is good for our city.

I never forget that the money we're dealing with at City Hall, is your money.

It's your hard earned tax dollars.

Every dollar we save at City Hall is a dollar we can spend in our neighborhoods.

But managed competition alone isn't enough to transform our city government.

We need our government to be responsive.

Results-driven.

That's what you deserve.

And that's why I created a Performance and Analytics Department.

This team of efficiency experts is conducting a top-to-bottom review of City operations.

They will develop performance measures so the public can hold City Hall accountable.

We will adopt a government-wide strategic plan developed by world-renowned management expert Ken Blanchard.

We will use tools like Open Data to make government more transparent.

We will work with Code for America to revamp our City website.

We will create a city government that's as innovative as the people it represents.

Through my "San Diego Works" program, we're harnessing the knowledge of City employees to boost productivity and eliminate government waste.

We need to reward innovation, not deter it.



Today, this program has empowered more than 550 employees to come forward with ideas to help save time and money – money that can be reinvested back in our neighborhoods.

You know, our City employees work incredibly hard every single day.

Our lifeguards are making our beaches safe.

Our sanitation workers are picking up our recycling.

Our dedicated City Attorney and his office are doing quality and professional legal work that protects taxpayers.

City employees have made so many sacrifices over the last several years, yet they are still unwavering in their commitment to making a better San Diego.

Please join me in thanking the 10,000 men and women of our City, who serve us every single day.

Every San Diegan has good ideas to improve our city.

Trust me, I hear about them.

All the time.

At the grocery store.

At the gas station.

So tonight, I'm introducing a plan to empower every San Diegan who has a good idea to make our city a better place.

I'm proud to announce the "Innovate San Diego Challenge," a collaboration with UT San Diego and Hero X.

This year, I will ask San Diego residents to join me in embracing our biggest challenges and opportunities.

Housing.

Entrepreneurship.

Creating a 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce.

The best solution will receive private funding to put their proposal into action.

San Diego is using creative thinking like this to become a model for cities across the country.

We're reducing costs by 700 million dollars through retiree health care reform.

We're saving nearly a billion dollars over 30 years with pension reform.

We've built up our savings account – our general fund reserves – to the highest point in a decade.

And today, San Diego's credit rating is at its highest level in ten years.

Yes, we are reforming.

We are innovating.

We are leading.

We have united as One San Diego.

And the best is yet to come.

2015 is the year we seize our opportunities.

We're going solve some of San Diego's biggest challenges.

And we are going to start by fixing our streets.

Let me say that again.

We are going to fix our streets.

As those of you who drove or biked here know, about a quarter of our streets are in poor condition.

As a cyclist let me tell you, if you think driving over a pothole is bad, try hitting one on a bike.

How did it get this bad?

Without a doubt, San Diego's recent financial woes drained our resources.

For years, the money to fill potholes went to unsustainable pension benefits.

If not for the pension crisis, our City would have had an extra one billion dollars over the past ten years.

But the problem goes back even further.

Much of the infrastructure that supports our city was built 50, 60, 70 years ago.

An effective plan to maintain and replace this infrastructure has never been put into action.

This is a generational problem.

But ladies and gentlemen, we are the generation that is going to fix it.

Tonight I announce that I am making street repair the City's highest infrastructure priority.

Period.

This spring I will ask the City Council to approve my five-year plan to double our street repair efforts.

We will repair one thousand miles of streets.

Our parks, sidewalks and other infrastructure need help too.

Yet we can't just throw money at this problem.

If you wrote a check for two billion dollars and said, go fix all of our neighborhoods, the City couldn't do it right now.

We have to first fix how the City manages its projects and money.

After eight years on the City Council, not even *I* fully understood how broken the current system is.

The City has hundreds of projects on the books, but they're not prioritized based on real-world needs.

And there are tens of millions of taxpayer dollars languishing in accounts for projects that are years away from being built.

Our neighborhoods need help NOW.

Simply put: It's time to repair the City's repair program.

This year I will bring forward a series of reforms, through both executive action and City Council vote, to ensure the highest quality repairs are made as quickly as possible – and that our city is better prepared to take on our infrastructure backlog.

Working with Infrastructure Committee Chair Mark Kersey, we will create the first-ever multiple-year plan for truly repairing our neighborhoods.

We will let contractors bid for City projects online.

We will use technology to eliminate red tape.

We will talk directly to you to find out which parts of your neighborhood need the most help.

And we will take new steps to hold private contractors accountable for their work to ensure it stands the test of time.

Contractors that don't do quality work will not be working for our City.

We will get this done.

We will fix our neighborhoods.

We will rebuild San Diego.

Our streets and infrastructure are the building blocks of our community.

I want to take a moment now to talk about an important part of the fabric of our community.

I want to talk about our football team.

When we watch the Chargers at the Q, it's more than a game.

It's when families share an afternoon together.

It's when friends reconnect with one another.

It's when San Diegans from all walks of life come together to cheer *our* team.

Dan Fouts to Kellen Winslow.

Phillip Rivers to Antonio Gates.

For generations the Chargers have helped bring San Diego together.

Unfortunately, over the past decade, our conversations have been overshadowed.

Too often we're not just talking about the great plays on the highlight reel.

We're talking about the possibility of losing our team.

At no point in San Diego's history has the possibility of the Chargers moving to Los Angeles been more real.

It's time for us, as a community, to come together to decide the future of the Chargers in San Diego.

This decision will be made on my watch as Mayor.

And I know that we can get to a solution.

I'm announcing tonight that I am assembling a group of civic leaders to recommend a location and develop a viable financing plan.

They will explore all possibilities to finance the project, with the clear direction that it must present a good and fair deal for San Diego taxpayers.

I will not accept – or support – anything less.

I will introduce the membership of this group at the end of the month. They will study two different options:

Building a stadium at the current Mission Valley location.

Or building a stadium along with an expanded convention center downtown.

Most importantly, this plan will be completed and made public this fall.

There's been a lot of talk about a new stadium.

This is my commitment: For the first time, this year, we will have a real plan to consider for a new stadium.

This is San Diego's team and San Diegans will have the final say with a public vote.

I'd like to thank the Spanos family, the entire Chargers organization and the fans for their continued commitment to San Diego.

Working together we can get this done.

My goal is that when the season ends, we won't be talking about whether the Chargers are moving.

We'll be talking about the proposal to keep them here.

We will fight to keep our Bolts in America's Finest City!

We will also expand our convention center.

Both the stadium and convention center are vital to San Diego, and together or separate, we can get both done.

The convention center is critical to our region's success.

Events like Comic-Con bring millions of visitors to our city, and showcase San Diego to the world.

Expanding the convention center will create thousands of jobs and bring millions of dollars in additional revenue for our neighborhoods.

During this year of action, my Convention Center Expansion Special Advisor, Steve Cushman, will continue to lead on this effort.

It's been a record-breaking year for tourism.

Visitors are flocking to San Diego, creating revenue that supports our neighborhoods and dynamic arts and culture community.

I look forward to working with Councilmember Lorie Zapf to bolster San Diego's position as an international cultural destination.

As strong as our tourism industry is, there is so much more that defines San Diego.

We are proud to be home to the largest concentration of military in the country.

Our thriving veteran community and their specialized skills position our local workforce head and shoulders above the rest.

Our defense industry is a leader in developing the technology that secures our nation.

And our tech community is breaking new ground every day.

Our city beats to the pulse of innovation.

San Diegans have kick-started the world's most dynamic companies and cutting-edge technologies, developing a network of creativity, ingenuity and opportunity.

We sequenced the human genome.

We are unlocking the mysteries of Alzheimer's, manufacturing the next generation of flight and finding cures for diseases that plague the world.

Our job is to nurture San Diego's innovation ecosystem.

We struck a landmark agreement with biotechnology firm, Illumina, to keep them growing here in San Diego.

We worked with AleSmith and Ballast Point brewing to help them add good-paying jobs and tap the keg of opportunity.

And in two months, city leaders from around the globe – Seoul, Stockholm, Vancouver and more – will convene here for the Global San Diego Summit.

Through a partnership with the Brookings Institute, I will release a plan to make San Diego companies more competitive on the global stage.

And in the year ahead, I'll be working with Council President Sherri Lightner to find additional opportunities for sustaining our economic growth.

My goal is to create an environment where the companies that start here, stay here.

Local startups should grow up right here in San Diego.

All neighborhoods should reap the benefits of San Diego's success.

That's why Councilmember Cole and I are partnering to bring growth and opportunities to Southeastern San Diego.

In February we're bringing builders, civic leaders and employers to the 94 corridor.

We will show them first-hand how neighborhoods like Encanto and Skyline are ready for more jobs, more shops, and more economic growth.

These communities are fertile ground for growth and prosperity.

This is the year we plant the seeds of opportunity in Southeastern San Diego.

We must connect every San Diego resident to opportunity.

Our city is home to the most innovative businesses, providing thousands of high-paying jobs in engineering, science and technology.

But many San Diegans don't currently have the training to fill these positions.

This skills gap threatens our economic competitiveness and limits opportunities for upward mobility.

The issues of poverty and jobs aren't going to be fixed by tinkering around the edges.

They can't be solved by the singular action of a school, a company, a city council, or even a mayor.

It's a complex challenge that touches every part of our community.

And it will take our entire community, coming together, to address it.

All San Diegans deserve an opportunity to share in San Diego's success.

That work starts tonight.

I'm assembling a group of San Diego employers, educators, innovators and workforce experts to connect San Diegans to the opportunities that exist in our own backyard.

Led by Mark Cafferty of the Economic Development Corporation, San Diego Community College District Chancellor Constance Carroll and UCSD Associate Vice Chancellor Mary Walshok, this group will develop an action plan to help San Diegans move into the middle class and encourage our innovative companies to hire locally.

In the next six months, they will recommend concrete actions and solutions.

First, we will improve access to affordable education.

Second, we will increase opportunities for young people in the fields of science and technology.

And third, we will connect San Diegans to lifelong, successful careers that command a higher wage.

Our measure of success cannot just be how many San Diegans have a slightly-better paying, low wage job.

It must be how many have the opportunity and skills to move into a better job.

Lastly tonight, I want to talk about libraries - and the power they have to change lives.

As Mayor, I pledge to bring opportunity to every neighborhood.

As a father of two children in public school, I've seen that opportunity often starts in our libraries.

They are no longer just a place to find books.

They are centers for change that increase access to education, close the digital divide and transform people's lives.



Which is why, after years of cuts, I'm proud to say that in this year's budget we restored library hours to their highest levels in a decade!

Two months ago I kicked off a new citywide afterschool program at eighteen branch libraries across our city.

This year, I am launching two new initiatives to help San Diegans of all ages.

Many San Diego residents don't have broadband internet at home.

In today's world, high-speed internet isn't a luxury; it's a necessity for education and employment.

So I'm happy to announce that this year we're tripling broadband speeds in every single library in every single community.

Education is a ladder to success.

And for many, the first rung remains just out of reach.

The realities of working and providing for a family mean that for some, going back to school is too difficult.

It takes too much time.

It costs too much money.

And while we can't solve all of these problems, we can put opportunity back within reach.

That's why we're partnering with the San Diego Library Foundation to launch a new initiative called Career Online High School.

We will give people the opportunity to earn an accredited high school diploma and career certificate online.

This will help San Diegans who are looking to advance their careers.

Our community will reach its greatest heights when every San Diegan has the opportunity to rise... up... into prosperity.

San Diego's story is changing.

The financial reforms and accountability we have championed are allowing for community revitalization and economic growth.

Whether you're an hourly worker ready to start a new career, an entrepreneur looking to create the next big thing, or a parent working to help your child achieve the very best, opportunity starts in San Diego.

This is the year we rebuild our neighborhoods.

This is the year we reinvigorate our middle class.

This is the year we reimagine what is possible.

I believe in this.

I believe in you.

And I believe in San Diego.

This is our moment.

Now let's seize it.

Thank you.

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