

**Mayor Todd Rogers' Remarks  
for the State of the City  
January 22, 2020**

Thank you Brad. Thank you Captain Sprengel for that excellent report on public safety. And thank you CityTV for that heartwarming and informative video about Lakewood.

Hello fellow Lakewood residents, business community members, and friends of our city.

CityTV's video did such a good job of capturing the details of what happened in 2019 that I won't be going back over all of those. Instead, I'm going to use my time with you to cover three main topics that capture the challenges and opportunities we face in Lakewood in 2020 and beyond.

And I want to emphasize the word "CHALLENGES" because I want to be clear that the year ahead will be VERY challenging for our city...possibly the most challenging year that we've faced in 65 years as a city.

You probably think I said that just to get your attention...and I did...but truly, I mean it, and I think you'll agree when I'm done.

And I don't want to be just bleak and sad in this speech, so I hope you'll indulge me in a few attempts at a little levity along the way to lighten the mood. But keep in mind, that we do really face a serious situation here in Lakewood this year.

So let me jump right in with our single biggest challenge.

I think everyone in this room has now heard about the budget crisis facing Lakewood...and the fundamental threat it poses to our quality of life.

As you know, over the past eight years, the State of California has taken over \$30 million in local funds away from us...and the state continues to take \$2 million every year.

The cumulative effect of those state takeaways has caused Lakewood's once-healthy fiscal condition to transform to where our city is now facing a \$5 million deficit next year, growing to \$10 million a year by the end of the decade. That's very significant for a city with a \$50 million annual budget. It's 10 to 20% of our budget.

Lakewood is not alone. Practically every city in California is facing a similar situation.

To keep our budget in balance the past two years, the City Council cut \$3 million in spending. We froze hiring for 11 vacant positions. We deferred most major repairs and maintenance to our parks and community buildings. The only projects proceeding or wrapping up now had specialized outside funding sources

But those \$3 million of cuts will seem rather insignificant if our budget situation does not improve, and we have to cut \$5 million next year...and \$10 million in a few more years.

Lakewood's parks and community buildings are a source of great pride to our residents, but many date to the 1950s and 60s and need regular repair and maintenance to stay in good working order. Some are already showing bad signs from the past two years of cutbacks. They will deteriorate even further and become more expensive to repair in the long run if we do not find the funds for that work.

Lakewood's smooth, well-maintained streets—also a source of great pride to our community—will also begin to deteriorate without adequate funding in the future.

Our community services...like recreation programs for all ages...and community facilities...like parks and pools...will have to be cut back or even closed in some cases if our financial situation doesn't change. Community events...like the Block Party and Tree Lighting...are real assets to our city and residents, but they cost money to put on...money that could be in very short supply.

And last but not least, Lakewood's longtime reputation as a safe community will be at risk if our fiscal situation deteriorates.

In Lakewood, we spend approximately \$13 million a year on a team of patrol deputies, detectives, special assignment officers and other crime fighting resources to keep our neighborhoods and property safe.

But with a \$5 to \$10 million a year deficit, this could require us to cut our number of deputy sheriffs and other public safety resources as our situation becomes more dire.

In short, the Lakewood that we have known and loved for many years will change rapidly if our fiscal situation does not turn around.

People often ask me, if the state government caused this mess by taking money away from Lakewood and other cities, why don't we just make Sacramento give us our money back?

Fair enough question...and believe me, we tried! We...and other cities...tried legislatively...and even through the courts. But the state prevailed.

So what's the solution?

Well, as I mentioned, we are not alone in this situation, and many other cities felt the full impact of the state takeaways sooner than we did in Lakewood because of our initially strong financial standing.

At this point, voters in dozens of cities in L.A. and Orange counties have enacted a local revenue measure to provide local funds for local needs that, by law, cannot be taken away by the state.

I was as initially reluctant as the next person about a local sales tax.

But I also value the community I live in and the need to keep our community in good shape.

So after studying the issue...and reviewing the feedback from over 2,000 Lakewood residents showing that they strongly value the services that Lakewood provides...I joined my City Council colleagues in voting unanimously to place "Measure L," with a ¾-cent Lakewood sales tax, on the March 2020 ballot for voter consideration.

It's important to note that, by state law, our sales tax cannot be increased by more than ¾ of a cent at this point. And if Lakewood doesn't implement our own local revenue measure at this critical juncture for our city, then another entity, like L.A. County, can...and most likely will...come along and pass a measure to take that last ¾ of a cent. And as we've learned, most county measures lead to little funding coming back to Lakewood.

Several other cities near us, including Cerritos, Bellflower and Paramount, are proposing a local sales tax in 2020. Long Beach already has one.

Thus, if Lakewood voters approve Measure L, our Lakewood businesses will still be competitive with our neighbors, which is very important to all of us on the City Council.

Accountability is also important. That's why our City Council crafted Measure L to include strict accountability requirements such as a citizens' oversight committee, public disclosure of all spending, and annual independent financial audits that ensure funds are used effectively and as promised...and only to benefit the Lakewood community.

And because Lakewood attracts a lot of shoppers and visitors from nearby cities, a majority of the tax will actually be paid by non-Lakewood residents. That will ensure that visitors to our city pay their fair share for the services we provide for them here.

So Lakewood voters have a very important decision in March 2020. Do we vote to enact a local measure for our local needs...or do we let our city's condition and services decline...and risk letting the county or other regional agency pass a revenue measure to fund their programs, even if they are not focused on Lakewood's needs?

Over the past year, Lakewood residents have also let me know that they realize that their own property values are affected by whether their community is financially stable and able to provide good city services.

They realize that this revenue measure is actually a smart investment in protecting the much larger value of their home or business.

You can get more facts about Lakewood's budget situation and learn more about Measure L at the city's website. There's also an FAQ sheet in your packet today.

So, you can see what I meant by this first topic being about a really big challenge that our city is facing.

And I wish it was the only challenge we were facing in 2020. But it's not.

We have two others that I want to touch on briefly, even though each could be its own speech.

But let me take a break from the serious news here to provide a little levity before we tackle our next challenge.

How many of you were here for our Award of Valor event this past November?

Well then, these next few photos will be a reminder of one of the most touching moments of that day. For the first time in our history, we gave an Award of Valor to an animal. The Martin's family dog Kona barked like mad and alerted them in the middle of the night to a fire raging in their home. That allowed the family to safely escape from a fast moving fire.

At our Valor luncheon, Jamie Martin read a heartfelt letter thanking her Lakewood neighbors for their amazing generosity and support as the family dealt with losing their home to that fire. Thankfully, the Martins are staying in Lakewood and rebuilding.

Now, speaking of Lakewood homes and neighborhoods, I need to talk about our next serious policy topic, and that's a legislative threat from Sacramento that could seriously undermine the quality of life in communities and neighborhoods like Lakewood.

There are legislators in Sacramento who are pursuing efforts to force cities to allow apartment buildings on single-family lots and other forms of dense housing that would strip away the character of largely single-family residential communities, like Lakewood.

Last year, the state legislature and governor approved a law that requires cities to allow second units of housing...or Accessory Dwelling Units...on any single-family lot.

Euphemistically, these ADUs are often called "granny flats" but there's no requirement that it be anybody's grandmother living there.

They CAN be used for family members, but they can also be used as rental housing. And the state forbid cities from requiring parking for these additional mini-houses.

State legislators also passed a law last year requiring cities to allow garages to be converted into ADUs...and again with rules that prevent cities from requiring onsite parking. In addition, state law also allows something called Junior ADUs, which are rooms within an existing home that are configured for possible rental use.

So basically a single family residence...or an absentee investor who buys the home...can now build...and squeeze in...an ADU into the backyard or garage AND a Junior ADU into the existing home and let all those new tenants park on the street, creating congestion in the neighborhood and other quality of life issues.

You'd think the state would give this new law some time to get implemented and tested in cities before adding even more housing density challenges, but that's not how life in Sacramento is playing out right now.

Instead, a housing density bill that was defeated last year...SB50...has been brought back for consideration. SB50, authored by Sen. Scott Wiener of San Francisco, would force cities to allow apartments of up to four units to be built on single-family residential lots...and would prevent cities from requiring anything more than one onsite parking place for every two units of that housing.

So imagine your Lakewood home having a multi-story, four-plex apartment pop up next door on a single family lot. There are eight adults total in that building. But only two parking spaces onsite for their eight cars. The rest all park in front of your house, your neighbors' houses, etc. And thanks to Sacramento, there is nothing that the City of Lakewood can do about it. We would have to approve the construction of that apartment building...just like we now have to approve new rental units in backyards and garages.

SB50 would force even bigger apartments and condos on cities in locations near busy bus stops, with cities having no zoning or planning control over it.

It's really an attack on the whole concept of single-family residential neighborhoods. Some state legislators are apparently saying that it's wrong to want to have your own modest home with a yard, a garage, and a quiet residential street where you can actually find parking. It sounds like an attack on the American Dream, and the City Council and I are very saddened by it.

Lakewood and most cities are not opposed to new housing. But we are opposed to having local oversight taken away that can protect the quality of life of the people who already live in our communities.

As an example of the kind of housing that can be built...and the proper city oversight that can work with it...take a look at this new apartment complex going into Lakewood at Elaine Ave. and 207<sup>th</sup> St.

It's 24 apartments of 3- and 4-bedrooms. But it went through our city's normal planning process, which we used to ensure that adequate onsite parking and other features are provided so that the quality of life is maintained for nearby neighbors and for new residents of the apartments.

I'm sure those new residents would prefer to not live in an SB50 apartment building that has everyone scrambling for just a few onsite parking spots. The Elaine apartments are the kind of new housing with local planning oversight that we think should be a model.

Lakewood and other cities worked hard last year to stop SB50. We succeeded then, but after a recent visit to Sacramento, I am less optimistic this year. But we will continue to fight hard, because protecting the character of the Lakewood neighborhoods that we know and love is very important.

Before we get to our final topic, let's take another break, and focus a bit on one of the joys of neighborhood life in Lakewood.

For me, one of the best parts of being mayor for a year is representing our city when a resident celebrates his or her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. And this past year, I had the honor and pleasure in wishing a happy 100<sup>th</sup> birthday to Shirley Miller, who has lived in Lakewood for 60 years, almost since our founding.

Shirley still lives in her neighborhood home and, remarkably, she rode a bicycle around her block every day until just two years ago...and still walks around the block every day even now. This has got to be one of my favorite photos from the past year.

The last issue that I want to bring up is public safety and crime.

Being in a safe community is why many families choose to live in Lakewood. My personal feeling is that it is the #1 priority for a city government, because without a safe community, you can't enjoy your parks, your shopping areas, your neighborhood, or even your home really.

As you know, property crimes started increasing in many California communities several years ago--and for many analysts--the spike in crime coincided with new state laws that released so-called low-level offenders from state prison and lessened the penalties and accountability for many property crimes.

Lakewood has been vocal in raising concerns about these changes in state law. We did it again just recently with our state legislators. Fortunately, there may be a measure on the state ballot this November to tighten up some of those new state laws in a way that will keep some serious and dangerous criminals off the streets for a longer period of time.

A couple of years ago, we decided in Lakewood that, even if the new state laws were making crime-fighting difficult for us, we were going to do everything we could at the local level to slow or even reverse the property crime trend that was hitting us hard.

We invested in extra hours for Deputy Sheriff burglary suppression patrols.

We increased our public information efforts with residents about steps they can take to make their homes and vehicles more secure.

We made an investment to help residents buy video doorbell cameras.

And as you heard from Captain Sprengel, the efforts have been paying off over time, although we still see too many property crimes and still see periodic spikes in some of those categories.

But the good news is that we have the tools here in Lakewood...and we have the will...to go after those spikes in crime when they happen.

Please join me in thanking the men and women of the Lakewood Sheriff's Station who do that important work day-in and day-out to protect and serve us.

I also want to thank the men and women of the Los Angeles County Fire Department who are here today.

We have three county fire stations in Lakewood. They do an amazing job in our city, answering emergency calls for life-saving medical intervention as well as fighting residential and commercial fires.

We heard about some of their exceptional work recently at the Award of Valor luncheon. And we also know that this past year has been a difficult one, as many of them have been assigned to fighting wildfires in other parts of our county and state.

So thank you to our Fire Department personnel for your service to our community and our region.

I've now given you a peek at what the year 2020 is looking like for Lakewood. It's not a typical year.

I wish it was going to be more "boring" to be honest...like the last time I was mayor when we won that interesting designation as California's most boring city.

I really enjoyed being known as California's most boring mayor. And after today's speech I'm sure you can understand why, right?

Well, this year is NOT going to be boring by any stretch. But it's going to be very important for Lakewood's future.

We have lots of challenges ahead. But Lakewood has faced those before...including financial challenges...and when we did, we pulled together and made decisions as a community that kept us moving ahead in a positive direction.

Time will tell how we face this year's challenge, but I am always optimistic when it comes to Lakewood. We have excelled as a community for 65 years, and I am confident that we will confront the challenge that we face now, become even stronger...and as always...live up to our motto of being a community where "Times Change, Values Don't."

The state of Lakewood is good...and we're going to keep it that way!

Thank you all, God bless you, thank you for coming today, and God bless the City of Lakewood.