

State of Hollywood Address
Eric Garcetti
January 26, 2006
Hollywood Chamber of Commerce

Thank you, Maryann. And thank you, Kaiser Permanente, for the outstanding work you do as a member of our community. I have been a Kaiser member for almost 34 years. In your own words, thanks for all to do to ensure that your patients and neighbors thrive.

Thanks also to Leron Gubler, to Board Chair Karen Diehl, and to each of you in this room. I especially want to thank my colleagues Tom LaBonge and Jack Weiss, who share the privilege with me of representing the most famous neighborhood in the world, here in Hollywood. I couldn't ask for better partners.

Our setting is fitting today. This is my first State of Hollywood Speech in the Blossom Room, birthplace of the Academy Awards. In this hallowed room, almost 77 years ago, Merit Awards were handed out by the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences to Wings for Best Picture, Janet Gaynor for Best Actress, and Emil Jennings for Best Actor. Johnny Grant, already sixty at the time, was runner-up that year.

But seriously, we love you Johnny. Thanks for having us over to the Roosevelt this year.

Speaking of Johnny Grant, this past May, Johnny got his mojo on, and unveiled the newest star on the Walk of Fame to Renee Zellweger.

In her acceptance speech that day, Renee talked about what it was like the first time she came to Hollywood as a young actress and the feeling she had as she walked up and down the boulevard, using up more than two rolls of film snapping shots of her favorite actors' stars. She said that she never imagined that she one day would join these players in terrazzo on the Walk of Fame.

About five years ago, I, too walked on Hollywood Boulevard, on my way to a Chamber-sponsored debate. Like Renee, I had a dream, one that seemed out of my reach that day. My dream was to represent Hollywood on the Los Angeles City Council.

As Renee did, I stand before you to say that dreams can come true here in Hollywood. As this is the first address of my second term as your city councilmember, let me say again, thank you for the opportunity to represent you. Since I addressed you last year, the voters of the 13th District unanimously returned me to office as your representative. Then, five months after my second term began, my colleagues humbled me by also unanimously entrusting me with the responsibility of representing them as the president of the Los Angeles City Council.

My election by my colleagues has redoubled my compact with my district and my commitment to Hollywood.

I've always said, that we should dream again in Los Angeles, but while we turn our eyes to the stars, we must also keep focused on the cracks on the sidewalk.

And we've shown that we can do both: in four years, we doubled the number of parks, made sure that there was an after-school program in every school, and reduced crime four years in a row. We enough streets to reach the ocean, picked up enough bulky items to fill the Kodak Theatre, and turned around our neighborhoods, one block at a time.

But steep challenges still vex our city. We face a housing crisis. We are strangled by traffic and pollution. And while we have made huge strides in public safety, we are not safe enough where we live and work. I know that we can meet these challenges, but only if we face them together.

So today, look out with me across the almost-limitless basin we call Los Angeles. Let us square the thousand city blocks we call Hollywood, and let us dream of what we could do with the 50,000 or so that lie beyond.

Each morning, more than a quarter million souls begin their day in Hollywood. And each year, we try to capture their story. We trace the plot twists and hairpin turns of the last 365 days, we step back and imagine that we are atop Mount Hollywood, looking down at the passage of time and the onward march of progress in our city and our lives.

But how do you capture a quarter million stories? You capture them one story at a time.

This year, I've invited six special guests to our gathering. Each of them embody the possibility and progress embedded here in Hollywood. Each one of them encompasses the struggles and the hopes that lie deeply rooted in our hearts.

You've heard the saying, "As goes California, so goes the nation." And many say that California's future be read in the tealeaves of Los Angeles. Well, the story of our city's future is told on storyboards that are drawn right here in Hollywood.

In short, we have been given a gift here in Hollywood, for it is here that we often glimpse the future first. Robert Kennedy once said that "Our future may lie beyond our vision, but it is not completely beyond our control." These six stories embody what we know in our heart and feel in our gut: that while we do not know exactly what the future holds, we can hand-in-hand, block-by-block, fix the foundation of vibrant, just, and extraordinary future.

We begin on one such block, east of here, tucked up against the Hollywood Freeway, with Maripat Donovan. A builder.

Maripat, a stage actress by training and experience, brought a play called the Late Night Catechism to Los Angeles from Chicago in 1999. Expecting to live in the San Fernando Valley, she followed an old plot line and fell in love with a beaten-down craftsman on

Harold Way. She beautifully restored it. Then the Hollywood bug bit her. And she began to dream big.

Maripat came to Los Angeles in a one-woman show, but she soon found herself in a one-woman redevelopment agency. With investment, equity, an enormous amount of elbow grease and the application of skills that she never expected to use outside of set design, she's helped to transform a small neighborhood—attacking trash, adding greenery, tackling homelessness and uniting her neighbors in service to their community.

She had a stake, but she sought a voice. Maripat Donovan, like many others in this room, found it in the neighborhood council movement. And this year, the Hollywood Studio District Neighborhood Council was born, its four corners named after the Emmys, Grammys, Tonys, and Oscars.

Together with the Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council, the Hollywood Hills West Neighborhood Council, the Hollywood United Neighborhood Council and the soon-to-be certified East Hollywood Neighborhood Council, Maripat and her colleagues are all neighborhood heroes. The work that neighborhood heroes do calls government's hand. It says, "We're here. Where are you?" We do well when we respond. We do our best when we turn that call into a call for action.

Last year, I was excited about the beginning of my district-wide program, Uniting Neighbors To Abolish Graffiti, or UNTAG. Across CD13, neighbors concerned about graffiti signed up as UNTAG block captains. They took responsibility for calling in graffiti the minute they saw it go up. My office held paint-outs, planted vines, and made sure that city departments responded to those calls. Together we swore to cut graffiti in half inside of two years.

It was no hollow promise: The week before UNTAG began, my staff and I drove every block of CD13. We counted twenty thousand, seven hundred and sixty-three tags. A year later, we performed the same count. We found that we had demolished our goal, lowering graffiti by 62% in just one year. East Hollywood was our standout neighborhood. There, you lowered tagging by 82%.

All of us on the CD13 team are proud to be your neighbors here in Hollywood. (please stand) We've always been here, but with the new year, we permanently moved our district headquarters just down the boulevard into the historic Mayer building at Hollywood and Western, where I now meet with constituents in Louis B. Mayer's old office.

Speaking of Mayer, the family of his old sparring partner at MGM, Samuel Goldwyn, gave the city half a million dollars to renovate the Frank Gehry-designed Hollywood Goldwyn Library on Ivar Street, an amount that the city matched. As an aside, this year is the centenary of Hollywood's first library, a Carnegie-funded library started by the Women's Club of Hollywood in February 1906 in a Tudor-style building on Prospect Avenue just down the street.

We don't have as many moguls here in Hollywood as we once did (unless you count Todd Lingren) but we do have the strongest bench of leaders in some time. Steve Maradian joined us in 2005 as the new president of Los Angeles City College, fresh from the American University of Armenia. Ed Collins of Disney and David Green of Nederlander continued to show unparalleled generosity to the schoolchildren of Hollywood. Johnny Grant gave his swan song Christmas Parade, and passed the torch to Todd Lindgren. Donelle Dadigan kept our Hollywood history alive in the Hollywood Museum. And Bill Roschen was appointed to the City Planning Commission.

The Hollywood Entertainment District BID, led by Kerry Morrison and Sarah MacPherson, tended to the boulevard. The BID paid for new historic streetlamps. They added \$100,000 from their own budget and private contributions to the CRA's stake in order to put brand new palm trees on the Walk of Fame. And they celebrated their 10th anniversary on the Boulevard.

Around the corner, Jerry Schneiderman developed the first adaptive reuse project in Hollywood, the Cosmo Lofts. A block north, I was able to secure funds to open brand-new soccer fields in Yucca Park.

Hollywood is not just a place where people live, it is a place of opportunity where people come to work. In the last four years, working together, we have brought thousands of new jobs to Hollywood. We have used government to unleash the creativity of this city, to bring back an entertainment and residential environment second to none in Los Angeles. Hollywood is finally king again.

Which brings me to my second story.

Down the boulevard, you can still catch a glimpse of Prospect Avenue. Prospect Avenue is what the street outside was named before it was the star known as Hollywood Boulevard—kind of like Norma Jean Mortenson before she became Marilyn. In 1903, two decades before Hollywoodland sold a single home, when pepper trees not palm trees lined the street, Janes House was built. Janes House has had many incarnations, from a local schoolhouse to Pompeia Smith's headquarters. A stately Victorian, it is the only one left from the dozens that used to form the streetscape of Hollywood. Thanks to the efforts of Hollywood Heritage and others, it has been saved and has been reborn. Where Charlie Chaplin's children once attended school, Richard Heyman's and his partners new restaurant, Memphis, now serve southern cooking in a steamy red-velvet interior. If the walls could talk, Janes House would tell us all a lot of stories. But let me share with you just one.

I'd like to introduce the executive chef of Memphis, Francisco Chaidez, and his executive sous-chef, Terry Fortia.

The first week of the year, I had the pleasure of meeting Terry and Francisco in the dining room at Memphis. I had come with Mayor Villaraigosa to both compare his

priorities for our city with those of the city council and to show him a little corner of my district. Before we were served our meal, Richard brought his top two chefs out to meet us.

Francisco Chaidez couldn't have had a more Hollywood story. As if following the path from the William Morris mail room to the director's chair, Francisco had started as a dishwasher at Tribeca of Beverly Hills. In a path that took him to Utah and back to Southern California, he rose to become the executive chef at Memphis.

Terry I had seen before. I just hadn't known it until I met him again at Memphis. In the days after Hurricane Katrina, when New Orleans residents were fleeing the rising waters to those distant towns that would take them in, Terry and his family found themselves at the Dream Center, a church-run community center overlooking the Hollywood Freeway. I went to the airport to greet some of the other folks. Terry had been the chef at the New Orleans Yacht Club. Now he was far from home.

But his luck turned back around. A good Samaritan gave him the keys and the pink slip to her car, a Dodge Caravan that would fit his family of nine. The media sniffed out the story of a castaway chef, telling the story of New Orleans through its gumbo-in-exile. And a Hollywood restaurateur who was opening a Southern restaurant watched the news and wasted no time in driving to the Dream Center and offering Terry a job.

Terry and Francisco's stories are not about charity. About compassion, yes; but it's compassion mixed with opportunity. It's what happens when the spark of the entrepreneur gets in the room with community and caring. It's Richard Heyman going to the Dream Center. It's Hollywood going from a blazing club scene in 2004 into 2005, the year of the restaurant. Opportunity doesn't come from everyone looking out for him- or herself. It's a beverage made from luck, heart and business. It's a Hollywood cocktail.

(It wasn't just Memphis: 2005 was the year of the restaurant. At Sunset and Vine, the Hungry Cat opened and quickly became one of esteemed restaurant critic Jonathan Gold's 99 Essential Los Angeles restaurants. Kitty corner from the cat, the Bowery and Magnolia energized the scene. Dessert called us across Hollywood at Lickety Split and the Disney Fountain.)

We gave Terry Fortia a welcome we should be proud of. But the welcome our community offers is only meaningful if it come swith the promise of safety.

Seily Rodriguez was a nine-year old girl who was killed crossing Santa Monica Boulevard on the way to school. Burton Yu, an Angeleno in his young twenties, was on his second day of work at Paramount Studios when he was struck by a car and killed crossing Melrose Avenue. Their tragedies have spurred action. We have now installed traffic signals near both locations—indeed, Paramount employee Gio Messale, who was injured at that same Melrose Avenue location, flipped the switch on their new crosswalk with me and Tom LaBonge last Monday.

Toyota of Hollywood

So let us look past the individual block or street to see the big picture. This year, Los Angeles became the second safest big city in America. We reached a crime low unseen since Johnny Grant was reading the traffic reports on KMPC. Hollywood itself saw a fifty percent reduction in gang crime. We accomplished this with the leadership of Captain Ron Sanchez and with the dedicated officers of the Los Angeles Police Department. Let me also thank Gary Minzer for his service on the Community Police Advisory Board. The BID helped place security cameras on Hollywood Boulevard, deterring crime and facilitating arrests, and my office secured cameras for Lemon Grove Park, helping secure that public space for its rightful users, the families of that neighborhood.

Safety is a human right. It comes down to us to ensure it. By combining the work of our police force with our commitment to our community, we are following through on our contract with one another. And we are allowing Hollywood to flourish.

So what happens when Hollywood flourishes? What happens when the dream factory fires on all cylinders? Through the new owners of the venerable Sunset Gower studios, I met some folks from an independent music and video production company this year. I'd like to introduce you to Jeff Miller, a line producer at Smuggler.

Smuggler was shackled up with another production company in Beverly Hills when it came time to find its own roof. As Jeff describes it, the company wanted a location that would cater to agencies' and clients' desires. When they found the site at Hollywood and Gower, at the eastern edge of possibility for them, they knew they'd come home.

They sandblasted the interior and hung chandeliers of Austrian crystal that can be seen from the street. Now they operate around the clock, in a building that houses 9 permanent employees but with shoots and projects bulges to fifty. Their selection has other agencies seeking to follow them. Jeff says that it's "set a new tone within the industry's perception of location as status."

Laura Thoel, the head of production at Smuggler, put it even more succinctly when she said, "I wouldn't work anywhere but Hollywood."

Just as small restaurants overtook megaprojects and nightclubs in 2005, this was a year for our entertainment business to sink its roots deep into our soil. Like never before in recent memory, the creation of entertainment takes place in Hollywood the neighborhood on a day-to-day level.

When Smuggler, hailed by Creative Magazine as the Production Company of the Year, a group of self-declared "taste snobs" say that Hollywood and Gower is the place to be, who are we to question them?

We also should recognize the work we've done together to change the city's face towards businesses. Leron Gubler has been your champion as my appointee to the city's Business Tax Advisory Committee. This year, the plan that Wendy Greuel and I wrote and that Leron helped push through went into effect, bringing a break in the business tax to every business in the city of Los Angeles, and eliminating it outright for more than sixty percent of all businesses.

Hollywood meant business this year. Led by the BID, the Chamber and neighborhood councils, our street closure committee continued to make sure that Hollywood balanced ease of transit with special events. Though not technically an entertainment venue, American Apparel became to Hollywood Boulevard what Denny's is to Sunset, locating three stores within as many miles. And the celebrated Holly Trolley, born from an idea I campaigned on to have a neighborhood circulator and incubated by the good work of Chamber Vice President Elizabeth Petersen and Alison Becker and Jane Bremer from my staff, had a great opening and showed that we don't have to be boring when we solve real-world problems.

Four years ago, we celebrated getting the Oscars—but we only get them for one night a year. At the same time, for years, urban planners, film buffs and tourists have clamored for a world-class museum of film.

Two years ago, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced that it was ready to build such a museum, and we politely presented them Hollywood with a note that said "For Your Consideration".

Are you ready for a coming attraction? The Academy has chosen a site, and it's in our neighborhood! It's planned for a two-block area bounded by DeLongpre Avenue on the north, Fountain Avenue on the south, Vine Street on the east and Cahuenga and Ivar streets on the west. The Academy will be presenting their site preference to the Community Redevelopment Agency on March 2nd, the eve of the Oscars, so I hope you'll come down not only to support them, but also to talk to E! Entertainment Television about what the members of the CRA board are wearing.

This is truly a magnificent announcement for Hollywood. I want to thank Helmi Hisserich and her team in the CRA, and I'd like to thank my own development team, Beatrice Hsu, who left my staff last year but joins us today, and Alison Becker, my planning deputy. And finally--and I really, never, ever thought I'd hear myself saying this--I'd like to thank the Academy.

But the Walk of Fame is awfully close to the Boulevard of Broken Dreams. The central moral challenge of our city in our time is in the eighty-eight thousand men, women and children who sleep on the streets of Los Angeles County every night. After Skid Row, Hollywood has the largest homeless population in the city. How do you tell eighty-eight thousand stories? You start with one.

Richard Cruz came to Los Angeles with a job offer from Miramax. By the time he

arrived, the offer had fallen through. When his savings ran out before he found another job, he moved in with an acquaintance in Van Nuys. When he caught one of his roommates stealing his possessions to buy crystal meth, he knew he had to leave. With nowhere to go, he found himself half-sleeping behind a bathhouse off Victory Boulevard, and wandering the streets in search of a private hedge to rest behind by day. He felt invisible, when he didn't feel loathed.

He caught a ride over the hill to East Hollywood, where some told him about People Assisting the Homeless, PATH, by the Hollywood Freeway. They took him in.

How many of us came to Los Angeles on a job offer? How many of us had a living situation that didn't work out? Richard could be any of us. He could be me; we lived in England at the same time in the 1990's, me as a student, he as a theater designer.

PATH gave him a room with a lock on the door and a bed, and he stayed there for 5 weeks. He got a haircut at the barber-shop on the grounds. By day, he pounded the pavement and pored over websites until he found a job. His first paycheck was at the corner of Hollywood and Vine, working security for the nightclub then called Deep.

He put together a small nest egg; not enough to get a car or an apartment, but enough to move out of PATH and get a room at an SRO hotel at 3rd and Main. He found part-time work, doing event planning with a company called Portal Productions. He's still looking for the better room, for a car that runs, for steadier work. He's still looking for home.

Hollywood can lead this city in solving the housing crisis. The answers are here, if we will open our eyes to them.

Three years ago, the Hollywood Interfaith Sponsoring Committee challenged me to turn around the housing crisis by building 500 units of affordable housing in Hollywood. Three hundred of those units are built. Three hundred more are online. The models we have demonstrated here show Los Angeles that our housing crisis is only a numbers problem. We have the largest housing trust fund in the nation, in dollars and per capita, and we know how to use it to attract five times the amount of money into Los Angeles as we put up, creating jobs and homes. At the corner of Sunset and Western, we opened the first-ever project to be completed with our city's affordable housing trust fund. It was the first-ever housing development built over a Walgreens, avoiding a design disaster of truly suburban proportions. On Vine Street, Gay and Lesbian Elder Housing is construction the first affordable housing project for gay and lesbian seniors. And on Hollywood and Gower, the CRA is seeking an operator for what will be the first true step towards a solution to homelessness: a permanent housing facility that will take people off the streets for good and bring. Them. Home.

Joel Roberts, the executive director of PATH, has started a group called Project YIMBY. You've heard of NIMBYs; well, a YIMBY says yes in my backyard. A church full of YIMBYs, Hollywood parishioners who demanded that we address homelessness by building homes, pushed me to support the CRA's construction of permanent housing at

Hollywood and Gower. And I ask you today to look at how our community has grown. Look at for whom it has grown, with beautiful affordable housing rising over Hollywood and Western and from the ashes of the Palomar Hotel on Santa Monica Boulevard. And say Yes In My Back Yard.

No roaring economy, no restored glamour will secure our legacy if we fail to lift this moral stain.

Let's destroy the myth that the homeless come here for the weather. Like Richard, they are here before they lose the roof over their heads. They include whole families, too; sixteen percent of them are under the age of 18. And they number 88,000 in Los Angeles county.

Too often when we ask why they are homeless, we wonder only as psychologists and ministers: are you sick? But we as policy makers and planners must add, where can we build?

All life, it has been said, is homecoming. The stranger coming to town, the hero setting out on a journey: each is wrestling with a world until she can call it home.

We must ask ourselves: Where can we come home to?

I'm asking you for more than help on housing our city, Hollywood. I'm asking for your help in shaping it.

I have been asked, since assuming the Council presidency, how I can possibly have time to tend to my district. I hope I have answered that to your satisfaction. If I haven't, I'm confident that I will by this time next year.

But let me turn the question on its head. I have been asked by my colleagues to take a leadership role. Rather than worry that I might leave you behind, which I could never do, I ask you to come with me.

Lead with me, Hollywood.

Show Los Angeles how to take back her every block, like Maripat Donovan has done in one neighborhood.

Show Los Angeles that opportunity, nourished with compassion, can thwart displacement, as it did for Terry Fortia. Show her the persistence and possibility that Francisco Chaidez wears on his chef's jacket, once a dishwasher's apron.

Show Los Angeles how to mean business, like you did for Smuggler. Show it how to make business grow without choking its neighborhoods, by continuing to invent and improvise, with your Holly Trolleys, your adaptive reuses, your BIDs and bars, your truly urban proportions and your essential restaurants.

Show Los Angeles, like you showed Richard Cruz how to come home.

I have one more friend in the audience, a young man named Shawn O'Connor. Shawn is a senior at Hollywood High School, where he's lettered in varsity football for three years. He's the star quarterback for the Sheiks, their football team. And last year, with my brother in Hollywood Tom LaBonge, my office found the funds to light up Hollywood High School's gridiron for its first ever night game in history.

Shawn O'Connor's game – his team's game was nothing short of spectacular that night.

With Polytechnic holding a 28-21 lead, the Sheiks scored a touchdown and pulled off a two point conversion, with Shawn blocking, to take a one point lead. They didn't just win the game: they broke a more than twenty game league losing streak. And kept it broken.

There's a whole city watching us, Hollywood. We're going to have to show them how it's done. We've known what a losing streak feels like. But we've also known triumph, and grace.

This is your night game, Hollywood. The lights are on you and the stakes are high. Let's see what you can do.

Right now, someone is landing at LAX from a flight that originated in Yerevan, in San Salvador, in Bangkok, in Manila. As we speak, someone who lives in Westwood is signing the escrow papers for a new home in East Hollywood and someone from West Virginia has just put down first and last month's rent on an apartment a few steps away from the Walk of Fame. Right now, there is a young person who has arrived on a bus at the

Greyhound Depot, fleeing a home that terrorized when it should have protected, who has no place to live. And there is a young actress chasing a dream, blurring her vision as she looks at your sidewalk stars to see if her name might fit in one of them.

The real state of Hollywood does not afford itself the simple truths, the easy answers, and clear absolutes we crave. As we learned here in Hollywood long ago, black and white is dead.

But in the shades and the nuances of the celluloid prints that make up this glorious place, we can make the honest measurements and see the undeniable trends that are a part of the daily color of Hollywood.

Never let our successes blind us—we've got too much to do still. Too many children to protect, too many homeless to house, too many parks to build, too many jobs to grow, too much gridlock to unlock, too many schools to build. But we know in our heart that that glimpse of the future is more hopeful now that it has ever been. And that is because of you.

Thank you.