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INAUGURAL ADDRESS
SAN FERNANDO MISSION
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Thank you, Mayor James K. Hahn, for administering the oath of office. Thank you for your years of service to our City, and let us be the first to publicly congratulate you on this, your first day as Mayor of the City of Los Angeles.

Thank you very much, Secretary Henry Cisneros, for your years of service to our country as United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, for your service as Mayor of San Antonio, and for serving as the host for today's ceremonies.

I know that I would not be before you today without the lifelong love and support of my family, who has joined us today: my mother, Lupe; my father, Santos; my sister, Julie; my brother, Ackley; my nephew, Christian; and my aunt and godmother, Tere Higgins.

And thank you to everyone – constituents and community members, colleagues, members of my staff, my friends, and my family for joining me in this day of celebration. Welcome! *Bienvenidos!*

Welcome to the place that more than 260,000 people from Arleta, Lake View Terrace, Mission Hills, North Hills, North Hollywood, Pacoima, Panorama City, Sun Valley, Sylmar, Van Nuys, and I are proud to call our home, the northeast San Fernando Valley.

And welcome to the historic San Fernando Mission – the only Mission in the City of Los Angeles. Thank you to Monsignor Weber, Cardinal Mahony, and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for allowing us to conduct today's ceremonies on these beautiful grounds.

The *San Fernando Mission Rey de España* was founded by the Franciscans more than 200 years ago because of its ideal location nestled in the foothills, with large areas of fertile land for growing crops like olives, wheat, barley, and corn.

This location was prized for its proximity to major trade routes to a dusty little pueblo 22 miles away known as – *Los Angeles* – Los Angeles.

Today, that dusty little pueblo is a metropolis of nearly four million people, and more than 200 years later, one is more likely to note our proximity to both the San Diego and Golden State Freeways.

As your Councilmember, I have worked hand in hand with northeast Valley residents, businesses, and community-based organizations. And just like the Franciscans who would bring back supplies from that dusty little pueblo, I take that Golden State Freeway to work each day, working to bring back basic City services to our neighborhoods in need.

But for decades, this corner of the City went without and for no good reason. Our community had resigned itself to lower expectations.

I remember growing up, as I was on the way to school, I sometimes had to walk by drug dealers doing their business in broad daylight, right in front of our house. As I walked, it was often on crumbling sidewalks that became muddy rivers during winter storms.

My local library – *when* it was open – did not have as many books or resources as other branches. I would be re-directed to other libraries further away for materials I needed for school.

I could recognize my street by the gaping potholes that always remained after years and years of neglect.

But I learned from my family just what can happen when neighbors come together and get involved. While drug dealers seized control of our streets, my parents were urged to join a newly formed neighborhood watch group founded by our friends and neighbors, the Fajardo family, on Mercer Street. What began in the Fajardos' garage around the pool table soon became a larger, more organized group that worked with LAPD's Foothill Division to fight crime in our own front yard.

Today, dozens of neighborhood watch groups help to keep our streets safe at night, and I would like to recognize each of the neighborhood watch captains who have joined us today. Thank you for your work on behalf of our community.

When our community decided that "enough was enough" at the nearby Lopez Canyon Landfill, I was there. Along with local residents in the pre-dawn light, we protested the fact that our neighborhoods endured overflowing trash trucks barreling down our residential streets each day. We made it loud and clear that we wanted a better environment – that we wanted environmental justice.

In high school, playing baseball for my *alma mater*, San Fernando High School, I had the opportunity to visit other parts of the City – Westchester, Pacific Palisades, Canoga Park, and Crenshaw – and I began to see firsthand that there were serious inequities within Los Angeles.

Today, I often speak to our young people – the future of our City – from Head Start programs to middle and high school students, to graduate students at Cal State Northridge. I share with them the reasons why I decided to run for public office.

What made me want to run for public office was knowing that someday, I would be able to give back and to help the community in which I was born and raised.

I ran for office, because I knew that someday, I could unite residents, business leaders, and City officials to bring a North Valley Police Station right here in Mission Hills.

I knew that someday, I would be able to work with the residents around Hubert Humphrey Park in Pacoima and with great community leaders like William Bryant. Mr. Bryant, together with

the Los Angeles Police Department's Foothill Division and the City's Recreation and Parks Department, worked to expand park programs and create an LAPD drop-in center at a time when tensions in the area ran high.

I knew that someday, I would be working with community-based organizations that serve us each day, like Casa Esperanza on Blythe Street. Casa Esperanza provides parenting classes, tutoring, and after school programs. Casa Esperanza has also helped to mobilize the community in its efforts to expand the Blythe Street pocket park.

I knew that someday, I would be able to work with neighborhood activists, like Phyllis Hines of the Lake View Terrace Improvement Association. Together, Phyllis, area residents, and my office worked to bring a long-overdue library to Lake View Terrace that will feature environmentally friendly building materials in the shadow of that old Lopez Canyon landfill.

I knew that someday, I would work with the parents of Arminta Elementary School. These parents submitted petitions with hundreds of signatures, calling for additional safety measures along nearby streets and crosswalks. Today, Arminta's parents play an active role by serving as volunteer crossing guards.

And I knew that someday, the northeast Valley would get 35 miles – *35 miles!* – of streets repaved, and more than 8 miles of new sidewalks in just *two years*, because together, we could do what the nay-sayers said was impossible.

The level of activism that we see today in the northeast San Fernando Valley is a great expression of the tremendous amount of positive change that we have seen in our community.

Our community has been empowered so that when finding a location for the Children's Museum is an issue at City Hall, your in-person testimony, your bundles of letters, your hundreds of phone calls, and your e-mails made a case – and made history – by bringing the largest museum of any kind to the San Fernando Valley.

It is because of you and the voice of our young girls and boys that right here in our back yard in Lake View Terrace, Major League Baseball has decided to build its first-ever Youth Academy. This Academy will offer more than just teaching our kids how to be the next Fernando Valenzuela, the next Kirk Gibson, the next Gary Sheffield, or the next Shawn Green. This Youth Academy will teach our young people the job skills they need for the future.

Members of the community of the northeast Valley, I value your support, I value your input, I value your wisdom, and I especially value your advice.

In Spanish, the word for advice is *consejos*.

There's a saying, "*Solo con sus consejos les puedo servir.*" – only with your *consejos* can I serve you well.

Some of the best *consejos* I get are from my neighbors that I run into at church, at the grocery store, or at the diner.

A young Senator from Massachusetts named John F. Kennedy once wrote, "...It is my duty to place the principles of my constituents, not mine, above all else."

Not only do I place the principles of my constituents above my own, but I know that the great strides we have taken in our community are a direct result of their work. The northeast San Fernando Valley is hardly the wealthiest community in Los Angeles. But I know that there is a richness of the soul that drives our community to give our children a better future.

Our wealth is not in our wallets, but in our hearts.

There's one gentleman I have worked with who has one of the biggest hearts of anyone I know – and that someone is Mr. Isaac Arias of the Pinney Street Neighborhood Watch. Not only has Mr. Arias helped to make his community safer, but he and the Pinney Street Neighborhood Watch, along with Pacoima Beautiful, worked to create a community mural just north of Van Nuys Boulevard that depicts our proud history, as well as our bright future.

Isaac can also tell you the story of El Dorado – a Pacoima street infamous for its dangerous patches of gravel and dirt. After putting up with this pock-marked street for more than 40 years, Isaac and the rest of the neighborhood now know that their Road to El Dorado isn't paved with gold, but with a brand new coat of fresh asphalt, thanks to the City's Bureau of Street Services.

Downtown, at that place we call City Hall, at each meeting of the Los Angeles City Council, I vote yes or no on behalf of my community – on behalf of people like Isaac, on behalf of the people who live on Isaac's street, and on behalf of everyone who lives, works, or has a business in the northeast Valley.

It is you, the community, who knows that if there's a problem on your street, whether there's a pothole, a tree that needs to be trimmed, or trash that needs to be picked up, you won't just get an answer – you'll get results.

I have shared with you several stories about just a few of our community's many heroes like William Bryant, like Phyllis Hines, and like Isaac Arias.

But for each person I have mentioned by name, there are dozens and dozens of others who are also heroes.

These heroes are the women and men who work two, sometimes three jobs a day so that they may provide a better life for their children, and their children's children.

These heroes spend evenings and weekends recycling bottles and cans one nickel at a time, so that someday, their children may go to college, or even graduate school.

These heroes are our neighbors, these heroes are our friends, and these heroes are our families.

I work for these everyday heroes.

America's most influential and most famous newspaper columnist, Walter Lippmann, once spoke before an audience of Harvard University alumni just before our nation's entry into World War II. Speaking to what we call today the "Greatest Generation," Lippmann called upon us to reach within ourselves for greatness. He said:

"We have come here... to fortify our faith and to renew our courage and to make strong our spirit... what we have to do, we shall do together, with friends beside us...we shall renew our courage, and we shall find the strength that we need."

Whatever we do together, as the "Greatest Generation" of the northeast Valley, with friends beside us, we will find the strength we need to do great things.

Together, we shall renew our courage and find the strength to one day see that no child in the northeast Valley goes to bed hungry or is denied access to health care.

Together, we shall renew our courage and find the strength to one day see that there are enough schools, libraries, and parks for every community.

Together, we shall renew our courage and find the strength so that families may take long strolls together in the evening without worrying about being held up at gunpoint or knifepoint by a gang member.

Together, we shall renew our courage and find the strength to create the right balance of housing, jobs, and effective transportation systems to create vital communities with strong roots.

Together, we shall renew our courage and find the strength to know that our community has a booming voice that is heard throughout the corridors of power at City Hall, and that our community can hold its head high with dignity.

Together, we shall renew our courage and find the strength to know deep down that we live in a place that we are proud to call home – a community that we would be proud to show to each and every one of the Franciscans who established the San Fernando Mission more than 200 years ago.

But today, we hear rumblings from those folks who want to split up our City – *our City* – from those who are seeking to draw a line in the sand – a line down the middle of Mulholland Drive.

Their voice is a voice of frustration, of discontent, and of dissatisfaction.

One way to address problems is to turn one's back and start all over again from scratch, to turn back the clock and to ignore the hard work and perseverance of the many who have come before us.

But there is another way. That way is to seek out excellence, and to demand accountability – to work from within to improve the ways in which our government responds to the people – and to our needs.

Regardless of what the future may hold, this much is true: this great, proud community of the northeast San Fernando Valley *will not* be divided. We *will not* be silenced, and we *will not* be frustrated, discontent, or dissatisfied. This community *will not* resort to shallow political posturing or selfish agendas.

This community isn't interested in breaking things up – we're interested in making things work.

This community *will* receive the services that we pay for and deserve – this community *will* testify, telephone, e-mail, and write to those in power to make sure that its voice is heard, because this community is empowered to help itself, to help others, and to help the entire City – a City that has the potential and the capacity for greatness.

Now that you've heard my voice, I want to hear you and the voices of cheering and of celebration.

I want to thank each and every one of you for coming to join us today, braving the heat and the traffic to share this great occasion with me, and my family.

I am truly grateful to you for expressing your confidence in me, and I look forward to serving you for *four more years*!

Thank you, may God bless you, and may God bless the City of Los Angeles.

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