

Official Remarks by City of Commerce
Mayor Robert C. Fierro
2007 State of the City Address
BASIC Luncheon Presented By
The Commerce Industrial Council Chamber of Commerce
Tuesday, August 21, 2007
Stevens Steak & Seafood House
Commerce, CA

“Hello and thank you for giving me the opportunity to share the good news about Commerce. My remarks today will touch on our city’s finances, key redevelopment projects, public safety, our management team and a few of our newest initiatives.

But before I get started, I want to introduce my council colleagues. Please welcome Mayor Pro Tem Tina Del Rio, Councilmember Rosalina Lopez, and Councilmember Joe Aguilar. Councilmember Argumedo was unable to attend today.

The Council and I pride ourselves on being proactive, involved, attentive, hard working, goal oriented and budget minded. Along with our city staff, we have gotten a lot accomplished and identified what needs to be done over the next five years.

Some of the members of our city staff who are here with us are: Director of Community Development Bob Zarrilli, Director of Human Resources Teresa McAllister, Director of Community Services Robert Chavez, Director of Library Services Evelyn Fullmore and Public Information Officer Brian Wolfson. Bob and Teresa are our two newest Directors.

I am also happy to introduce our acting City Administrator Linda K. Olivieri. Linda has worked hard this past year to implement our vision and improve city operations. Thank you Linda.

Last year we announced plans to rebuild our management team. Today, we are well on our way. We have hired an Assistant Director of Community Development, an Assistant Director of Public Services, an Assistant Director of Finance and a city planner.

We have currently completing our recruitment for a Redevelopment Agency Housing and Project Manager, a Crime Prevention Program Coordinator, an Environmental Services Manager, an Assistant Emergency Preparedness Officer, a City Attorney and a permanent City Administrator.

The ideal candidate for City Administrator will have significant experience in Economic Development, have strong management experience; be a proven leader and a skilled negotiator. They will have a rare opportunity to truly transform the city.

To improve communications with Commerce businesses the Council created the Mayor’s Business Relations Subcommittee. The committee meets once a month and includes Industrial Council President Helene Simmons and Executive Director Eddie Tafoya.

The committee is working together on environmental concerns, state and federal issues and important public safety matters.

To encourage citywide revitalization, the City has launched the Keep Commerce Beautiful Campaign. Keep Commerce Beautiful is a campaign to restore the appearance of our city streets, public spaces, neighborhoods, homes and businesses in conjunction with our code enforcement program.

The initiative will include beautification events in different parts of the city, a public education campaign, and a Home Improvement Fair. The Home Improvement Fair will feature demonstrations on home remodeling, lawn care and other useful tips. Businesses interested in helping out are encouraged to join us.

To control traffic and increase safety on our streets, we are implementing a red-light photo enforcement program. The equipment and cameras will be installed at the following four intersections: Gage and Slauson, Telegraph and Garfield, Eastern and Slauson and Telegraph and Atlantic.

The system will be maintained by Redflex Traffic Systems and monitored by the LA County Sheriff's Department. However, before writing any tickets, there will be a 30-day warning period and an extensive public education campaign.

We have also started an initiative called Commerce Family Wellness. Commerce Family Wellness is a program to encourage fitness, healthy living and nutrition. Our goal is to educate the public about asthma, allergies, diabetes and other diseases.

We will have a Health Fair for the public on November 3rd. There will be free flu shots, entertainment and more than 40 health care providers on hand including doctors, dentists, social workers and nutritionists. We welcome your participation as well. Helene and Eddie donated raffle prizes last year as did Unified Western Grocers and Commerce Casino.

In the area of public policy we have opposed the 943-megawatt power plant that developers want to build in the City of Vernon. The environmental impact is not worth it. Numerous studies show that children are among those most at risk when exposed to increased air pollution.

In the area of redevelopment, the city's biggest project is the development of the Telegraph Road Urban Entertainment Center. The city has a development agreement with the J.H. Snyder Company and is currently negotiating the acquisition of the remaining properties.

The project will consist of a pedestrian-oriented high-quality retail center featuring an architectural design compatible with the Citadel and Casino. It will include a multi-screen theater, quality restaurants, and commercial space.

The Council acting as the City's redevelopment agency is also involved in several other major redevelopment projects. The projects include:

The Commerce Hyundai Dealership on Telegraph Road

- The recently completed Hyundai Dealership on Telegraph Road is scheduled to have a Grand Opening in October.

The Citadel

- Plans are being submitted for the third phase of the renovation and expansion of the Citadel.

A “House of Blues” type Boxing and Entertainment Arena

- Developers are interested in creating a “House of Blues” type entertainment complex featuring a sports arena and restaurants at the corner of Telegraph and Washington.

A Costco Business-to-Business

- The Council is working on an agreement to develop a business-to-business Costco at the former Firestone site.
- The Costco project would anchor the southern end of the Telegraph Road Corridor and consist of a 126,000 square-foot retail store and gas station.

The Former Commerce Plaza Hotel site

- To date the demolition of the former Commerce Plaza Hotel has been completed.
- The Commission also entered into an ENA with S & G to develop and operate a new-car dealership.

We are also in the process of developing new monument signs for the city’s borders. The signs will show everyone entering Commerce the pride we have for our city.

The design of the monument was developed in collaboration with Mayans Development and the Citadel.

The City Council also recently approved a 5-year Pavement Management plan. The plan prioritizes road repairs based on existing road conditions. We are currently completing a slurry seal project in the Rosewood Park area, reviewing plans for the rehabilitation of the Bandini Park area and requesting funds through the MTA to resurface, widen and reconstruct Washington Blvd.

In the area of training we implemented a citywide customer service program. The goal of the program is to better serve everyone who interacts with the city. The program includes employee training and technology improvements.

The key features are online registration for Parks and Recreation programs, a computer scanning system for the Aquatorium and fitness rooms and a searchable library system that allows patrons to search the catalog at the library or offsite via the Internet.

The City Council has also re-implemented employee general information meetings, Council/Executive Team strategic goal setting workshops and staff reports for all capital improvement projects.

In the area of Public Safety, crime through July is down 7% compared to a year ago. Auto thefts fell 23%. Arson dropped 14% and larceny 8%.

To protect your business from crime, we added a dedicated deputy to the Special Problems Team. Gary is working together to improve communication between the city, Sheriff's department and Commerce businesses.

Together with Ralph Vivero he implemented an e-mail network with over 100 contacts, established a Business Watch program and worked to reduce crime.

Through education and communication several businesses have improved their security and loss prevention efforts. Companies that have benefited from the resources of a dedicated business deputy and seen a reduction in crime at their facilities include Rolled Steel, Kaiser Aluminum, El Gallo Giro and 99 cents only stores.

Graffiti has also been decreased in the city with the collaborative efforts of the Sheriff's Department, Probation Department and the City's graffiti removal crew.

To augment our efforts the City Council has added an additional full-time painter and a part-time painter to the crew, planted vines on the wall behind Veterans stadium, installed surveillance cameras, doubled the reward for information leading to the conviction of graffiti vandals and improved the documentation provided to the Courts during Court proceedings.

Here are a few other things to note about our public safety efforts...

Commerce now has a record-high 75 Block Captains in the Neighborhood Watch Program.

We hosted 18 National Night Out Parties.

Over 1,300 residents participated in the event

And this year, in addition to the support of the Industrial Council, **Target** purchased banners for each block party and attended the event.

Together with other volunteers, our Neighborhood Watch Groups are making the city safer for all of us.

To improve the effectiveness of the city's emergency information system we have signed a service agreement with Connect – CTY. The system will enable us to notify affected parts of the city immediately in a crisis situation. With a single phone call we can reach thousand of residents, businesses and local officials.

To make sure your contact information is in the system, I would like you to pick up one of the flyers in the back of the room before leaving today. There are instructions for signing up via the Internet or by phone and all of the information is confidential.

I want to also talk briefly about the city budget. The City Council adopted the Fiscal Year budget on June 13th. Revenue is up 5.6% from last year. The Council appropriated a little more than \$45 million for city programs and services. 32% of the funds have been allocated for Public Safety services, 21% for Parks and Receptions programs, and 10.5% for public services.

In addition to the funds for additional staff, the appropriations include:

- \$5.5 million for law enforcement services
- \$7.6 million for fire protection and
- \$4 million for facilities, ground maintenance and park contracts.

Before I conclude I would like to thank all of the business people who made a donation to the Commerce Scholarship Program, contributed to the Library Renovation Project, donated items to the Summer Safety Fair or simply inspired our community with your generosity and support. We appreciate your efforts and are proud you choose to base your business here. We do not take it for granted and we are determined to do all we can to make certain every dollar invested in Commerce is money well spent.”

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