



Coachella State of the City 2018

Remarks by Mayor Steven Hernandez

Hello, and thank you for that wonderful introduction.

Before we get started, has anyone tried the candy apples on the tables? They are truly amazing! If you take a look at the label, you'll see that they were made by Heavenly Confections. President and CEO Jenny Ishikawa has been making these in her home for her friends and family for quite some time. She recently started making them for her business, thanks to the Cocineros Program. Coachella teamed up with the Small Business Development Center and Riverside County Economic Development Agency to create this program to help people turn their home cooking into a small business. Jenny took part in an 8-week program that taught her and several other ambitious people about marketing, business administration, finance and budgeting, and permitting processes to get their businesses up and running. The city even chipped in a 25-hundred-dollar grant to help cover startup fees.

Coachella has already helped six people with this program, and we're very excited about the success of Heavenly Confections and all of new businesses involved with the Cocineros Program.

In addition to apples, I'm here today to spread the word about our accomplishments and bright future through this, the annual State of the City address. I'm proud of what the city has accomplished in the past year, and excited and optimistic about the future as we build a New Coachella for the 21st Century.

Today, we will share with you some of the big projects already underway and examine what lies ahead. While we will highlight projects in the private sector, we will also look at the large number of public works projects. But a vibrant community is more than just buildings, roads and businesses. We also must celebrate our culture, heritage and history. Coachella is more than just a place where we work and live. It is a place we should all be proud to call home.

It is easy to see how we are on the precipice of a New Coachella for the 21st Century. We are at the beginning stages of a dramatic rebirth for our city, the likes of which are unprecedented for Coachella and the eastern valley. We are poised to grow not just our economy and populations, but to nurture and expand our artistic community as our fine city blossoms into the cultural hub for the eastern Coachella Valley.

The signs of this growth can be seen in all corners of our city, as Coachella literally transforms before our eyes.

The key to developing and maintaining this transformation is really about taking a closer look at the core of how our community operates and the opportunities that are available. That is why the entire city council and I are working to create a stronger and more diversified economic base.

Going back to when Coachella was first settled in the early 1900s, agriculture has played a key role in our local economy, and in the history and culture of our community. We still see this today, as businesses such as Sea View Packing, Woodspur Farming, Ocean Mist Farms, Desert Valley Date, Prime Time Produce, Anthony Vineyards and others continue to thrive.

We look forward to these businesses continuing to play a key role in our economy for many years to come. In a few moments, I will go into more detail about how we are looking to expand our agriculture industry into new areas, while seeking new opportunities to keep Coachella relevant and economically viable.

Another place where we are looking to leverage our existing assets to create a bigger and better Coachella is downtown. We see nearly unlimited potential for this area as a walkable district for shopping and entertainment, all anchored by the brand-new library and conference center that will open to the public on October 6th. I could probably spend all day talking about the library, but I'm going to try to hold in my excitement for just a few more minutes when I'll have a lot more details.

Of course, the path to a better Coachella leads right down our roads. That's why we are embarking on multiple projects to modernize our transportation infrastructure. This includes widening several of our main streets and adding sidewalks and bike lanes to ensure the safety of pedestrians and drivers while improving the quality of life for all of us.

Improving our quality of life isn't just about what is new, it's about embracing the events and qualities of the past and using them as a foundation for our future. Celebrating our history fosters community pride, provides a sense of identity, and demonstrates all that makes Coachella unique.

As we create and redevelop our downtown area, we are working to keep a consistent look and feel. As you may have noticed with our new library and conference center, we are designing our new buildings to incorporate a Spanish revival architectural theme. This is a direct nod to our earliest days as a community, and the many people of Mexican descent who now call Coachella home.

To expand on that heritage, we are creating a number of cultural events to position our city as the epicenter of Latino culture in the Coachella Valley.

As our city grows, we want to help new residents better understand how our community has developed over the years. That is why we are creating a book on the history of Coachella, which will highlight immigrant experiences over the past century and exemplify how this community continues to be a positive influence on our city.

As Cesar Chavez once said, quote, “We need to help students and parents cherish and preserve the ethnic and cultural diversity that nourishes and strengthens this community - and this nation.”

We firmly believe that by commissioning this book and making it available to people of all ages at our new library, we are following that advice. Combined with the additional educational resources that will be available at the library, the City of Coachella is working hard to provide residents with all of the resources they need to improve their quality of life.

Of course, better jobs and diverse employment opportunities will also improve the lives of the people who call Coachella home. As I mentioned a short time ago, agriculture is currently the biggest industry in our city. In order to build a New Coachella for the 21st Century, we are looking at opportunities to expand the scope of this industry beyond fruits and vegetables to include cannabis cultivation. The city is also moving forward and charting a path for an industry new to Coachella – tourism.

Following years of planning, we are now starting to see the first developments of these new industries moving from bold ideas into reality. Take a look at this video as City Council member Emmanuel Martinez shows us more.

[VIDEO 1 PLAYS HERE, APPROXIMATELY 5 MINUTES]

Wow, it’s really exciting to see the resort moving forward in a big way. We would like to thank developers Stuart and Joe Rubin for providing us with access to the resort for that construction update and look forward to seeing Hotel Indigo open to the public.

I would also like to take a moment to expand on the cannabis cultivation facilities that are in development. Combined, these facilities will cover 2 million, 875 thousand square feet, which is almost three times the size of the Westfield Palm Desert mall. The two largest projects, Coachella Green and Coachella Research Park Number 2, are each almost as large as the mall. And Coachella Research Park Number 1 is nearly double the size of the Indio Walmart Supercenter.

That’s not the only area where we are looking to grow our economy. The city is actively working to transform the historic Pueblo Viejo District downtown into a new focal point of economic, social and educational activity.

The centerpiece of this effort is something I'm truly excited about: our new library and conference center!

As you've probably noticed, the 15-thousand square-foot building already stands out as a shining star downtown. Designed in a Spanish Revival style, you will immediately notice the arches and colorful ceramic tile throughout. But the real standout feature is the clock tower. Designed with mission bells in mind, the tower features dozens of melodies that can be played on the hour, or for special events. The bell tower is already in service, and the chimes can be heard across the Pueblo Viejo area.

This beautiful building sets the standard for future improvements downtown, as we work to transform Pueblo Viejo into a more desirable place. Surrounding the building is a new, 34-thousand square foot park featuring a landscaped paseo, outdoor reading spaces and meeting break-out patios.

Of course, it's what's on the inside that really counts. The new building doubles the space of the current library, adds a computer lab, study rooms, a conference center and the new Sixth Street Café. And we're proud to say that café founder Steve Garcia is a Coachella native.

We also see the potential for this new facility to serve as an educational and cultural hub for our city. To that effect, we are exploring fresh new ideas on how the library and conference center can better serve our citizens. We are hoping to add a variety of educational programs to benefit people of all ages. As we continue to work on the specifics, these programs could include computer classes, study sessions for those with ADHD, and after-school programs. The new library will also have additional space to host adult reading clubs in English and Spanish, and other reading programs for teens, young children and toddlers. On the cultural side, we're looking at engaging people through arts and crafts workshops, movie showings and special seasonal events. We've had a city committee that helped guide the creation of this fine facility. Once the doors open, their mission shifts to developing new and exciting ideas to maximize the benefits it can bring to Coachella.

The new library officially opens to the public on Saturday, October 6th. But you don't have to wait until then. I'm inviting all of you to join me at the library from 6 to 8 tonight for a first look inside this magnificent new building!

A few blocks west of the library, you will see another significant project in Pueblo Viejo. The Riverside County Department of Public Social Services is developing a 30-thousand-square-foot office building in the Spanish Revival style, in keeping with our vision for the neighborhood.

This is a significant project for Coachella in a number of ways. First and foremost, it provides easier access for our neighbors in need of essential services such as food and healthcare assistance. Secondly, the county is expected to staff the building with close to 300 employees. This is notable because it brings an additional 300 well-paying jobs to Coachella. These

employees will in turn provide a steady flow of additional business for nearby restaurants and retail establishments during the day, and potentially generate more foot traffic and increase business opportunities in Pueblo Viejo. This is the type of project we see as a winner for businesses and the people of Coachella.

The city is always looking for new opportunities to make it easier for developers and new businesses to set up shop in Coachella. One way we try to help is by consolidating services into one central location. Later this year, we will relocate all of the city's business permitting, planning and code enforcement operations into a new 15-thousand square foot center. This building at the corner of Enterprise Way and Avenue 52, just down the road from our Corporate Yard, is scheduled to open in December. Placing these departments within a single building should improve communications internally, resulting in quicker and more efficient services for developers and new businesses.

We have a number of other significant projects on the way that not only help businesses, but also the residents of Coachella.

We are about to begin a major project to widen Avenue 48. The main objective of this project is to alleviate traffic in the area. If you were out at El Grito this past weekend, you can see how this 3-point-3-million-dollar project will make a big difference for people visiting Rancho Las Flores Park, or anyone travelling through the area.

The most noticeable part of the project between Jackson and Van Buren will be widening Avenue 48 to 6 lanes, with three lanes in each direction. This work also includes bicycle lanes and sidewalks. To further improve safety, a stoplight will be added at the intersection of Avenue 48 and Van Buren. By the time the project is completed next March, you won't even recognize this stretch of road.

And there could be even more changes to Avenue 48 in the future. We are currently working with the Coachella Valley Association of Governments to secure state funding to build a bike path that will be known as the Music and Arts Line. Inspired by the Coachella Music and Arts Festival, the route will feature musical elements, art displays and interactive artistic creations.

This 10-mile path along Avenue 48 from Coachella to La Quinta would include safety improvements such as protected intersections and buffers between the path and auto lanes. It will also connect to the CV Link path.

Coachella also has big plans for Avenue 50. We are working with the county, state and federal governments on a series of infrastructure projects. Starting on the western edge of town, we are looking at widening the road, adding continuous bike lanes and sidewalks, building a bridge over the Whitewater Wash, adding an overpass and new interchange with Highway 86, extending Avenue 50 eastward, and eventually connecting with Interstate 10 with a new interchange. This series of projects will open up new areas of the city for housing developments such as La Entrada and new commercial areas. This would also take some pressure off the

Dillon Road interchange and offer a new gateway to Coachella for people driving from Phoenix and points east of the valley.

There are a number of other upcoming infrastructure projects with one common goal: making Coachella a better place to live. Let's take a look now at this video from Mayor Pro Tem Betty Sanchez to see what else is in store.

[VIDEO 2 PLAYS HERE, APPROXIMATELY 5 MINUTES]

While those Cesar Chavez memorials provide lasting tributes to an important part of our heritage here in Coachella, we are also ensuring more frequent and growing celebrations of the diverse cultures within our community. Nearly 97 percent of our people are Latino. And the great majority are either newly emigrated from Mexico or among a first generation born here in the United States. This is why we embrace and pay tribute to this culture.

One of our biggest celebrations was held just this past weekend. Our El Grito – Fiestas Patrias Celebration just keeps getting bigger and better every year. The event commemorates Mexico's Independence Day, when Father Hidalgo first started the effort on September 16th, 1810, to free the country from Spanish rule.

Today, many Coachella residents continue that celebration of their homeland. The El Grito event here in Coachella has grown to one of the largest Mexican Independence Day gatherings in the United States. More than 25 thousand people attend the annual gathering at Rancho Las Flores Park to enjoy food, drinks, family fun and top-notch musical performances. We are so proud of this event that we have trademarked the "El Grito" name to demonstrate our desire to keep this tradition going. We had an absolutely beautiful evening this year. If you weren't out there I highly recommend attending next year. Not just because I'm the mayor, but because it's a lot of fun.

Our next big cultural celebration is now just a month away. Based on the success of the inaugural "Tacos, Tequila and Chavelas," we are bringing this gathering back on Saturday, October 20th.

Once again, we will host the festival downtown at Veterans Memorial Park. Those who attend can sample tacos from more than a dozen local restaurants as they compete for the "Best of Festival" title. As the name implies, there will also be tequila and chavelas available to complement those dishes.

And if that's not enough to tempt you, visitors will also enjoy a live DJ, mechanical bull rides, roping and corn hole games, and agua frescas! Last year's event sold out, so be sure to buy your tickets soon.

We start November with two big events on Saturday, November 3rd. This starts with a ceremony to honor all of the men and women from Coachella who have served our country in

the armed forces. This will take place appropriately at Veterans Park downtown. Following the ceremony, our veterans will be treated to a pancake breakfast. This is just one small way our community can thank these brave men and women for their dedication to the United States and our American way of life.

On the evening of November 3, be sure to come downtown for the annual "Run with Los Muertos." This 5-K run and walk through Pueblo Viejo offers people a way to honor the memories of loved ones during this one-of-a-kind nighttime event. To make it even more enticing, Raices Cultura will decorate the Pueblo Viejo with Dia de los Muertos displays. And it is all capped off with live music and an outdoor beer garden. This is another event you need to see to appreciate, and once you see it, you'll want to keep coming back each year.

We start off December with our Coachella Christmas parade. As we move through winter and into the spring you can expect more popular events such as Suavecito Sundays and Movies in the Park. These events not only provide entertainment for our fine city but allow residents to gather and bond with their neighbors. It is all part of our mission to make Coachella a place we are all proud to call home.

That pride is just one reason I can say that the state of our city is strong, and our future is even brighter.

We are now starting a period of unprecedented growth and transformation for Coachella. We are expanding upon our agricultural roots by embracing opportunities for cannabis cultivation. With nearly 3-million square feet of cannabis production facilities, Coachella expects hundreds of new jobs and potentially millions of dollars in additional tax revenue. That offers us amazing new opportunities to repair existing infrastructure and fund new facilities and programs.

We are also diversifying our economy and expanding into business sectors that are entirely new for Coachella. We see how the Hotel Indigo brings us into the tourism industry in a big way. People who flock to the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival will now be able to stay in the real Coachella. We firmly believe that the hip atmosphere of the hotel will make it a popular destination year-round.

Our downtown is also on the cusp of a dramatic transformation, with a planned renovation of the senior center, construction of the County Social Services building, the new library and conference center, and newly created social opportunities. All of these improvements are designed to inspire our citizens and kick start new business development.

If what you've seen and heard this afternoon isn't enough to convince you that Coachella is the place to be, join me now for a tour of our new library to see first-hand how we are Creating a New Coachella for the 21st Century.

Thank you, and let's get started on our bold new future!