



# **State of the City**

## **Delivered by Santa Fe Mayor David Coss**

### **Wednesday, Sept. 3, 2008**

Good evening residents, neighbors, elected officials, city employees and guests.

Welcome to my annual State of the City Address and to our new Community Convention Center.

In 2008, there is one thing that unites us all as Santa Feans ... construction. Our official slogan may be "The City Different," but the official sound of Santa Fe is the jack hammer.

Santa Fe is a city undergoing a great transformation, from work on the Rail Runner, Cerrillos Road and the Railyard, to the magnificent building where we are gathered today. Some of these projects have taken years to get to this point, others decades. None of these projects could have been accomplished without community collaboration.

My vision for Santa Fe is a community in which all residents work together to enjoy the rich quality of life they want and deserve.

Quality of life isn't just a buzz phrase. It means cultivating a community where our residents have housing and economic opportunities. It means protecting our river and natural resources. And it means providing basic, everyday services. These are the three

areas that I will talk to you about tonight: housing and economic opportunities, protecting our environment, and basic services.

Before I get further along, I would like to recognize the members of Santa Fe's City Council. Our City Councilors work hard to serve their constituents and to address the needs of residents today and into the future. I thank them for joining us this evening.

I'd also like to thank Galen Buller, our city manager, and the 1,629 city employees who work hard every day to provide services to residents. City workers fix potholes and maintain our parks. When your water meter freezes, it's a city employee who shows up regardless of the hour or temperature to fix it. Public service is a calling. It's a tough job and an important job. We feel privileged to do this work.

The first area I will speak to tonight is housing and economic development opportunities.

As Santa Fe continues to top lists as one of the country's healthiest cities, best places to live and top travel destinations, there is an increasing and undeniable economic divide.

Not too long ago, I was walking through the Casa Alegre neighborhood when I saw a man sitting in his pickup truck. I thought he looked familiar and walked over to say hello. The man started reminiscing about his old neighborhood. His family had moved to Rio Rancho, and now they wanted to move back. But they couldn't afford it.

Santa Fe is one of the most desirable cities in the world. While we are proud of this, there is also a downside. As more people come to know the beauty of our city and culture, property values rise, pricing native residents out of neighborhoods and then out of the town.

The City of Santa Fe is committed to providing affordable housing opportunities to all of its citizens in all of its neighborhoods. Affordable Housing is critical to a healthy community because it enables our workforce to live, not just work, in Santa Fe.

According to a Homewise study, our local economy loses an estimated \$300 million in spending because although people may work in Santa Fe, they spend their paychecks in the communities where they live. In the last year alone, 640 workers moved outside of Santa Fe County, taking with them approximately \$21 million in annual spending.

The good news is that we are doing more to increase affordable housing than any other city in the state, and in some cases the nation.

We work with a number of community partners to provide programs and resources to make affordable housing possible. These efforts include Community Development Block Grants; the Santa Fe Homes program --- which requires 30 percent affordable housing in all new developments --- and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

We have developed a 5-year strategic Housing Plan. It emphasizes workforce homeownership and includes recommendations for affordable rental housing for seniors, low-wage employees, and people with special needs. Moreover, we are one of only a handful of municipalities that uses its general funds to support non-profit affordable housing developments.

A Workforce Housing Funding Initiative will go to a public vote next March. This initiative would be supported by a tax on higher-end homes. For example, an \$850,000 house would be taxed \$1,000.

That money would be put into a fund to help keep our nurses, teachers, auto mechanics and other working Santa Feans here. With an additional \$1.5 million another 60 working families could call Santa Fe home and homeowners could have low-interest loans to make energy improvements.

Mayor Pro Tem Rebecca Wurzbarger will soon introduce legislation to complement an initiative introduced at the state level by Lt. Gov. Diane Denish. Councilor Wurzbarger's proposal will provide down payment assistance to Santa Feans. We will call upon businesses and the community at large to support this so we don't lose another 640 workers next year.

Some of our affordable housing initiatives have faced challenges in court. We've heard the rhetoric and nay saying before. We've heard that these programs can't work or won't work. But like the Living Wage, we are proving that these programs can and do work. In fact, visionary leadership at the state, municipal and community levels has mostly helped us to avoid the foreclosure crisis that has swept the nation. In January, I went to Washington DC where hundreds of mayors were talking about their struggle to deal with this issue. It was striking that we were able to prevent this situation with our fiscal fitness and affordable housing programs coupled with the state's Home Loan Protection Act.

This time last year, I announced that our City Councilors and a coalition of businesses, community and labor leaders and members of the faith community supported an expansion of Santa Fe's Living Wage Ordinance so that just about anyone who works in Santa Fe makes \$9.50 an hour or more. That expansion passed, and went into effect almost 9 months ago.

We are improving our city, one paycheck, one worker and one family at a time. We are showing the world it can be done; a Japanese national TV news crew came to Santa Fe to interview me because they see our city as a model for the movement surfacing there.

And as the city works to strengthen Santa Fe's economy, we recognize that 85 percent of Santa Fe's businesses are locally-owned. Independent business is the economic engine of Santa Fe. That's why our refocused Economic Development Division is partnering with the Santa Fe Alliance, the Chamber of Commerce and other community organizations. Together, we are developing our workforce, green initiatives and creative industries.

I am pleased to announce to you today the success of our latest effort to provide meaningful pathways to employment for the youth of Santa Fe. The city has funded a “Green Collar” jobs pilot program, which began in July. The lead partners in this project include the Santa Fe Alliance, ¡YouthWorks!, Earth Care International, and the Santa Fe Community College.

We have young people working at local businesses to learn green industry skills, including energy efficient retrofits, solar panel installation and green construction. While in the program, these youth also take a class at the Community College to supplement their on-the-job training with science, technology, engineering and math.

I am thankful to Los Amigos, Vermejo Park Construction, and Cedar Mountain Solar. We hope to involve more local businesses and double the number of young people when the pilot continues Phase 2 in November.

While community partnerships have proven to be integral to our economic sustainability, these partnerships are also vital to our efforts to protect our river and our environment, which is essential to a good quality of life in Santa Fe.

As many of you know, a project close to my heart is restoration of the Santa Fe River. My administration has made a clear commitment to repairing this precious resource so that it will once again be a source of great community pride.

There is nothing like watching children playing and laughing along the river’s banks.

This summer, I had my photo taken with a little girl who caught her first fish on the Santa Fe River as part of Councilor Trujillo’s annual fishing derby. To me, this is a glimpse of the potential that a healthy, living river can bring to our community.

The City is currently halfway through its second \$150,000 contract with ¡YouthWorks! Through this contract we are providing our at-risk young people with meaningful employment, workforce development training and gang intervention. More than that, we are providing a way for them to invest in and reconnect with their community. Hiring these young people was a deliberate move. It couldn’t have made more sense and we will continue to support these types of programs.

I recently learned that Santa Fe has the most parks per square mile in New Mexico. Thanks to you, the voters, Santa Fe’s river and parks will benefit from a \$30 million bond. \$3.2 million of this bond will fund river trail construction from Alto Park to Frenchy’s Park, doubling the amount spent on the Santa Fe River from last year.

Another \$2 million will be spent on the downtown Santa Fe River Park. This park was added to the state’s Register of Historic Places last month. The park is also under consideration on the federal register, illustrating the river’s historic significance.

In two weeks, we will break ground on the first new section of the river trail to be built inside the city limits in 10 years.

Last year, I announced a plan to designate 1,000 acre-feet of water for flows in the river. The City's Long Range Water Supply Plan, currently under consideration by Council committees, identifies water for the river once the Buckman Direct Diversion project is fully operational. We are planning to break ground on Buckman next week.

A wet river channel is more than something nice to look at; it creates a healthy corridor for plants, wildlife and people. The Watershed Association and Santa Fe River Commission are working diligently to help Santa Fe realize a living river once again.

This type of partnership is another example of our community working together to provide the quality of life we deserve.

The parks bond I just mentioned will provide \$9 million for trails. The work of Councilor Patti Bushee and the Bicycle and Trails Advisory Committee will move forward with this funding, and 5 new trails will be completed by August of next year. In May, 300 people gathered on the Plaza to celebrate Bike to Work Week. This annual event is one way to promote bicycling in Santa Fe, but we must do more to make Santa Fe a bicycle-friendly community.

We continue working to protect our environment in other ways. Some laughed when we announced that Santa Fe should be the green capital of the United States. Going green is more than a trend; it's a necessity.

Since the city increased its recycling service from biweekly to weekly, we are recycling about 100 tons more materials per month than we were last year.

We have replaced all 147 traffic signals with LED lights. These lights use 90% less energy and have resulted in an annual savings of \$148,000.

The City of Santa Fe is also proposing to place solar panels at our Wastewater Treatment Plant so that 1/3 of the power would be generated from renewable energy.

Santa Fe was among the first cities in the nation to power its bus fleet with compressed natural gas. Today, more people are riding the bus than ever before. In the past year, city buses logged more than 680,000 rides; this is nearly 55,000 more rides than last year. Thanks to a new policy introduced by Councilor Dominguez, we expect our ridership to continue increasing as a result of a free ride initiative for youth ages 18 and under. This program will foster a new generation of bus riders, and this increased demand will help us expand and improve our future service.

We're doing what we can to make City Hall more energy efficient as well. We hired an energy specialist, have conducted energy audits of city buildings and have adopted an energy policy. It may not seem like a big deal to ask city employees to turn off their

computers at the end of the day, but the estimated annual cost savings is approximately \$20,000 per year. We have implemented other measures that will save even more money and energy.

Our energy specialist, Nick Schiavo, is aggressively seeking grants to move these initiatives forward. One successful proposal brought in \$125,000 for a system to reduce electricity usage at the Genoveva Chavez Community Center.

The City's draft Green Building Code is finished and will be presented for comment and review in the coming months. The code focuses on high performance building construction and is part of the Sustainable Santa Fe Plan. This could not have moved forward without the work of Councilor Calvert and the Sustainable Santa Fe Commission as well as the involvement of local builders and energy experts. Again, this is another example of community collaboration to improve our quality of life.

All city residents should be applauded for their water conservation efforts. Our overall water use looks like it will even be less than last year, even though we are serving more people.

When it comes to protecting and restoring our environment, there is always more we can do --- and Santa Fe will do more.

The final factor for a good quality of life in Santa Fe is providing and improving every day city services.

I want to begin with public safety. It's one of the most basic services of government.

Last year when I came to you to deliver my annual address, our police department was struggling just to get enough officers on the street to cover a shift. They were racing call to call. The time devoted to neighborhood patrols and preventative policing was – at best – 5 minutes of each hour. And our residential burglary rate was skyrocketing.

This year, the story is different.

We are now implementing the most comprehensive plan in years to recruit officers, improve response times and reduce crime.

Our aggressive recruitment efforts have resulted in hiring 40 new officers since January 2007. Earlier this year, the City Council approved a plan developed by Police Chief Eric Johnson, the Police Officers union, and staff to add 45 new officers over the next three years.

You can already see the results.

Police statistics show that we are making more arrests and the residential burglary rate has dropped by 27 percent.

We have started 37 new neighborhood watch groups in the last year. We have eight officers certified to patrol on bicycles. We will hire two youth engagement officers.

I am very happy about this, but we also know that there is more to be done, and Santa Fe will do more.

We need officers living in our neighborhoods. We need officers to coach little league, volunteer with the Boys and Girls Club, and serve as positive role models in other ways. That's why affordable housing for officers is a key component of our enhanced recruitment strategy. The City has partnered with Homewise to offer affordable housing to police officers, including \$15,000 in down payment assistance. Through this partnership, we have put 2 officers in houses and 6 more are in the pipeline.

We are committed to a safer Santa Fe, and our amplified efforts are not limited to police.

We've hired 18 new firefighters this year. Fire Chief Chris Rivera and his staff are preparing for annexation by implementing three new Battalion Chiefs for quicker and more efficient response. We will soon complete the construction of Fire Station No. 3 on Cerrillos Road. We've upgraded the computers in our fire trucks and ambulances to serve you better.

A safe and secure community requires more than manpower and equipment. We also must ensure that everyone in our city feels comfortable calling our public safety officials for help. This includes everyone from immigrants to victims of domestic violence.

I have been outspoken on the issue of immigration. I take great pride in Santa Fe's reputation as an inclusive and welcoming community. But we are being tested like never before by the lack of federal immigration policy reform.

Arbitrary federal raids that break up families and communities must stop. In Santa Fe, federal agents arrested an immigrant father on false charges in front of his child's school. This was traumatic not only for his child, but other children of immigrants. We have kids wondering, is my dad or mom going to be there when I get home?

I wish, as a mayor in the United States of America, I didn't have to work on this issue. But local officials cannot stay silent while their communities are polarized and families are torn apart.

I commend our City Council, especially Patti Bushee, and our Police Department for taking great strides to protect all our community members and make sure that people are able to contact law enforcement in the event of a dangerous situation, regardless of their national origin or immigration status.

At the U.S. Conference of Mayors in June, I sponsored a resolution calling for comprehensive immigration reform that promotes the reunification of families, provides legal status with a path to earned citizenship and designs a plan for current and future immigrant workers.

This resolution passed unanimously. Mayors nationwide agree that immigration reform is integral to the wellbeing of our families and communities.

The city has become more of a leader in coordinating a community response to domestic violence. In the first quarter of this year alone, police received more than 620 reports of domestic violence. Children are often the victims or witnesses to these crimes. The long-term effects are immeasurable.

My administration is gaining traction on the problem.

In April, we put on the largest domestic violence training ever held for area law enforcement. 150 officers are now better able to respond to domestic violence situations and to help victims access necessary services.

We have just completed a survey to determine the barriers that our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender population faces when they need help. Additionally, we are working with St. Vincent Hospital to revise protocols so that domestic violence victims are identified as such on their first admittance to the hospital --- not the second, third or fourth.

This year we launched a Safe Haven Project in partnership with the Santa Fe Rape Crisis and Trauma Treatment Center, and Esperanza Shelter for Battered Families. Partners in the Safe Haven Project receive training on what can and should be done to help victims of domestic, dating or sexual violence. These partners then serve as a place of temporary safety for someone in crisis.

I implore businesses, churches and nonprofits to call our domestic violence and sexual assault liaison, Carol Horwitz, and enroll in this program.

I would like to recognize Carol. She has called every reported victim of domestic violence in Santa Fe, at least once, to make sure they know about the services that are available to them.

Carol has been actively working on a campaign to increase reports from witnesses with the Coordinated Community Response Council and Esperanza Shelter. Their work has resulted in a 52 percent increase in bystander calls. This means that instead of staying silent, the community is actively taking a stand against domestic violence. I hope this trend continues.

I consider the improvements in public safety in Santa Fe to be one of our greatest accomplishments this year. Continuing to partner with the community on this issue is integral to improving our quality of life.



While focusing on our public safety efforts, we have continued making exciting progress on other basic city services.

You won't see the improvements made by our Wastewater Division – and that's a good thing. Wastewater is spending nearly \$12 million to rehabilitate its treatment plant and sewer lines all over the city so that the system doesn't back up or break down.

We've also been working hard to make our streets safer for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians through roadway improvements. Cerrillos Road, the city's longest and busiest street, is being reconstructed and the intersection of Rodeo and Richards has been vastly improved.

We're updating our ADA Transition Plan so that our streets are more accessible to residents and visitors with disabilities. We've already installed 300 curb-ramps throughout the City.

Sewer pipes and streets are not the most glamorous projects to talk about. But nationally, it's been estimated that we will need \$1.6 trillion over the next five years just to maintain and expand our infrastructure. Many communities don't have the funds. We recognize these infrastructure investments are important and necessary.

I am pleased to tell you that for the first time in 10 years, the Land Use Department is fully staffed. In 2006, there were 18 vacancies.

The time required for most inspections has been significantly reduced. For example, building and plumbing inspections that used to take 4 or 5 days now only take 1 or 2. We are looking at ways to improve other permit services.

The rewrite of the Land Use Code has begun and we're hopeful that the Council can adopt many of the changes this fiscal year.

In July, 15 new building codes were adopted, bringing the city into compliance with international, federal and state rules that govern everything from straw bale homes to subdivisions.

Land Use and the City Attorney's Office are working together to implement the historic Annexation Settlement Agreement with the County, so that in five years New Mexico 599 and I-25 will be the new city boundaries. Thanks to the persistence of Councilor Chavez, this will finally put to rest confusion for the 25,000 residents living there about who provides their essential services.

I see members of the Planning Commission are here tonight and I would like to thank them for their service to our community.

And finally, community members and Historic Preservation Division staff organized a public celebration in October commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Just imagine what our city would look like without this law. I thank the Historic Design Review Board, the Old Santa Fe Association and Historic Santa Fe Foundation for their dedication to maintaining our city's architecture, character, and charm.

As we continue to invest resources in the physical infrastructure, we are also expanding basic services that enhance our lives in other ways, such as recreation centers, libraries and after-school programs.

All over town, more and more residents and visitors are using city recreational facilities. Overall recreation attendance reached nearly 234,000 – up more than 9,000 visitors from last year. In July, it was amazing to watch the nearly flawless organization of the Genoveva Chavez Community Center's first triathlon.

Our libraries have also been expanding. Participation in our children's summer reading program has increased 51 percent since the opening of the Southside Library Branch. More than 200 hours of mentoring were given by teens to young children in the Power Readers Program. We've also begun renovations at the La Farge branch. And if you haven't been on our library's blog, you should have a look, because it won an award from the Santa Fe Reporter for being Santa Fe's best blog.

We continue to partner with local nonprofits and public school programs that benefit young people. The city's Children and Youth Commission provided \$1.4 million in grants to 35 organizations for programs including child care for teen parents, temporary assistance for families in crisis and after-school programs and summer camps. Councilor Dominguez sponsored legislation to double funding for after-school programs totaling \$480,000. The Community Services Department employed 120 young people to work in summer and after-school programs this year, serving 1,400 children.

This year we also emphasized healthy lifestyles programs for children and adolescents, including physical fitness and nutrition education.

Thank you to Councilor Ortiz, who sponsored this effort and has also sponsored legislation to increase funding for such programs in the coming year.

Meanwhile, the Santa Fe Arts Commission plans to expand its thriving ArtWorks program into all 21 elementary schools.

These programs are not only fun activities, but they provide important outlets for young people. We have all heard the statistics that juvenile violence and crime increase during after-school hours. For kids who do fall through the cracks, the City of Santa Fe's Juvenile Justice Program partners with the state in a coordinated effort to reduce juvenile crime and enhance alternatives to detention programs. As mayor, I have enjoyed

presiding over Teen Court and watching young people confront school and community issues together.

You know, there are so many things for us to be proud of, it's almost hard to keep track. In order to keep the public better informed about city services and initiatives SFGTV – Cable Channel 28 –was launched in October and is running new programming every week. Additionally, our new city website, launched in December, is not just easier to navigate with more up-to-date information, it's helping to change the way City Hall communicates and serves the public. Although the website has only been live for 8 months, SantaFeNM.gov is already winning awards.

I have just talked to you at length about three priority areas integral to my vision for quality of life in Santa Fe: housing and economic opportunities, protecting our environment, and basic services.

There are two projects that are so big and so bold that they touch on all three of these priorities, yet don't fit into any single category. The Santa Fe Community Convention Center and the Railyard are two of the largest public works projects in modern Santa Fe history. After decades of work, these projects are now nearing completion.

You may be pinching yourselves in disbelief that you are sitting here today in the lobby of our new community convention center. This center is something residents and business leaders have talked about for 20 years. Today, I'm proud to give you a small preview of this building. Even before the doors open, we are holding dates for 36 local and community events, 26 arts and cultural events and 20 conventions. We have signed contracts through 2011 and are holding dates through 2015. Convention Center Director Keith Toler and his staff are working hard to market this green, LEED-certified building and target community groups and event planners to showcase Santa Fe as a green meeting and event destination.

I would like to express my gratitude to former Mayor Larry Delgado, Santa Fe City Councilors and Tesuque Pueblo for their historic collaboration on this important civic project.

One of the first events planned at our new community convention center is the International Creative Tourism Conference to be held here on Sept. 29. The convention is on target to attract 200 decision makers in creative arts and tourism from 21 different countries.

Conference participants will identify economic opportunities, improve skills, and develop best practices for creative tourism programs. It's about cities helping cities; holding the conference in Santa Fe puts our city's arts and culture on a global platform and provides an opportunity to see how other places around the world have preserved their history and heritage.

This is also an important economic opportunity; building our creative workforce will help Santa Fe remain resilient in a challenging national economy.

Councilor Wurzbarger deserves recognition for her vision and hard work to bring this conference here.

The convention center will also be home to a community art gallery, run by the city's Arts Commission. This 2,500-square-foot, city-funded gallery will feature our local, northern New Mexico artists. Thank you to Councilor Chavez for your leadership in this.

Crews are working day and night to complete the convention center. I hope you will come back on September 25 for our official grand opening when we will unveil a world-class community convention center worthy of our world-class city.

The success at the Railyard is equally exciting; and it's another project that wouldn't have happened without community involvement. Back in 1995, hundreds of residents banded together in an unparalleled way to preserve this common ground as a gathering place for our community. Today we see the collective vision for this space becoming a reality.

The Railyard will be a hub for community activity with art, the Farmers Market, Warehouse 21, movie theaters and retailers as well as space for people to live and work. It will serve as a connector that stitches the north and east side of our city to the south and west side. And once Rail Runner service is underway, it will enhance our public transportation opportunities by making commutes and visits easier, more economic and environmentally friendly.

In addition to the dedication of community members, this project wouldn't have been possible without the work of the Land Use Resource Center, the Trust for Public Land, the Santa Fe Railyard Community Corporation and the City of Santa Fe. I would like to thank former Mayor Debbie Jaramillo for her vision and work in the early days as well as the City Councilors who have worked on this over the years. I'd also like to thank Public Works Director Robert Romero and Public Works staff who have worked tirelessly on this project while simultaneously ensuring the successful completion of the community convention center.

On Sept. 13 and 14, I invite you to come celebrate this new public realm. This is your park, and it couldn't have been done without you!

I am so proud to be your mayor as we approach Santa Fe's anniversary as America's oldest capital city. I want to thank our newest Councilor Rosemary Romero and the 400th Anniversary Committee for taking the lead on the commemoration of this important milestone. As we honor Santa Fe's past, we recognize that the work we do today will serve as the foundation for the next 400 years.

Together, we are moving our city forward in a way that serves our residents, and inspires people around the world.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with some renowned archaeologists from Egypt, including the director of the Valley of the Kings, one of the most famous archaeological sites in the world. The director said that when he informed a colleague he was traveling to Santa Fe, the colleague responded with “Wow! Santa Fe!”

Although his English is quite good, the director said he had never heard of this word “Wow” and didn’t understand what it meant... until he arrived here. He and the other archaeologists said they were amazed at Santa Fe’s expression of its architecture and history. The archaeologists called Santa Fe one of the most beautiful and culturally significant cities in America.

This is when I got to say ... “Wow” ... These are men who work on 3,000 year-old pyramids. They were moved by our community’s efforts to preserve and honor our culture, history and heritage.

As mayor, I feel very fortunate. I get to have a lot of “wow” moments.

... When we celebrated the 1,000th affordable home in Tierra Contenta.

... When we honored a police officer for risking his life to pull a woman from a burning car.

... When I saw a little girl singing the National Anthem in Navajo at the School for the Deaf while her big sister translated.

And I always say “wow” after 100,000 people spend the weekend in downtown Santa Fe for the Indian Market, and we have the streets cleaned by Monday morning.

We have so much to be proud of.

Quality of life doesn’t just happen. It must be intentional.

My vision for Santa Fe is a community in which all residents work together to enjoy the rich quality of life they want and deserve.

Together, as a city and as a community, we are doing this.

Thank you.