

Mayor David Coss'
State of the City Address
October 19, 2011

I'm pleased to be back in our Community Convention Center. This LEED-certified facility is one of our community's great assets and brings diverse national and international recognition. Like the International Mountain Biking World Summit that will be here next year. We were selected for that conference over Lake Tahoe and Jackson Hole for a number of reasons: This facility is one; Our amazing bike trails and beautiful scenery is another; but most of all it was due to an incredible community effort by a coalition of independent bicycle shops, the Second Street Brewery and Bicycle Technologies International, or BTI, a growing bike-parts distributor here in Santa Fe. Preston Martin and Andrew Wright are the founders and leaders of that company and Preston is here tonight.

I've just returned from NYC because Conde Nast Traveler's Magazine readers named Santa Fe as the 3rd best city to visit in the US, better than both New York and Chicago. This is a great place for active, outdoor vacations, for nature and environmentally friendly travel, for food, wine, spas, wellness, art, culture and history. Of course, we also are a United Nations designated Creative City, the first in the country.

We're very fortunate in Santa Fe to have many assets that are crucial to our local economy and to our quality of life and those two things are completely interconnected. Santa Fe's history, proud traditions, clean air, an expanding trails network, progressive housing policies, position as a world-class center for arts and science and our commitment to smart infrastructure investments all contribute to the tremendous quality of life here. That quality of life attracts companies like BTI and major international conferences like the Mountain Bike Summit, which then significantly impact our economy. The cycle continues with reinvestment in community assets that add to our superb quality of life.

The word 'community' really means something here in Santa Fe. We see each other at the store, at public events or while exercising. We're small enough to have close-knit neighborhoods, but big enough to have real city needs. It's our sense of community that has allowed us to meet and overcome our problems again and again, and where we draw strength to move confidently into the future. We need to use this, our greatest strength, our greatest asset, our community to do great things.

That's why tonight I'll be talking about the portfolio of projects that we've put together for the Opportunity and Quality of Life Bond. It's a portfolio of investments that will yield a return of a prosperous future for Santa Fe. Now is the time to prepare and plan for the infrastructure that we need for a strong economy in the 21st century.

We cannot be complacent. We have a diverse group of projects that will help all areas of town and all parts of our economy thrive. We will build broadband to create permanent, high wage jobs and industries. Through solar projects, we will develop green businesses

and train a skilled workforce, we will provide public transportation to connect and empower the workforce. We will develop our quality of life through bike trails and build a badly needed park in the southwest part of town. We will create opportunities for families to access affordable housing and we will make sure we are safer by equipping our police and fire departments with the tools they need. We will strengthen our water security by improvements to our arroyos and storm water systems.

We turned on a solar energy system at our transit division recently which is a perfect example of what the Opportunity and Quality of Life Bond is about because it gives us a local source of energy and makes us less dependent on power generated elsewhere. The system was built by Positive Energy a local company, who employed local people to do the work and trained them in valuable new skills. One exceptional young man who worked on the project is Douglas Rael. He originally trained through one of our City economic development investments, the Green Job Training Program run by Youthworks. He interned with Positive Energy through the program, and has since been hired full-time. Last year, he got his electrician's license, and this year he installed the solar system that makes our green public transportation system even greener. We need to make more of these investments.

Santa Fe has weathered the recent economic hardships better than many places; we've benefitted from the wisdom of our 400 year history and from our shared sense of community. We know that the best way to protect and preserve the past and to nurture our community is to invest in the future. We now have an opportunity to upgrade our community assets, our safety and security and our quality of life ... to strengthen our economy and build for a prosperous future.....that's the key point I want to make tonight, and will get to more details in a moment....but I don't want to get ahead of myself now...because another important thing to say is that the State of the City of Santa Fe is strong, stable and healthy.

Our strength comes from the community itself. This IS a place where many people, like Fred Cisneros, make huge contributions ... This IS a place where local businesses donate money, time, energy and expertise to non-profits and community events. This IS a place where an individual can have an idea and make a big difference. Shannon Murphy is a young woman who wanted to help our young artists and musicians build community, and gain recognition. So, she put together a coalition called the After Hours Alliance or AHA! and, this September the inaugural AHA Festival and Progressive Arts Fair took place in the Railyard with around 2,000 people attending. The event created energy & enthusiasm for the next generation of great Santa Fe artists and musicians and in the words of one attendee, who voiced what many people felt, "This is just what Santa Fe needs."

This year the Railyard also hosted the multi-media festival called Currents. Frank Ragano, Mariannah Anster and Stephen Guerin, media artists, technology specialists, non-profits and businesses all worked on what could almost be described as video projectors gone wild. As my wife and I walked around looking at the amazing images projected on the sides of buildings one evening, we heard a young boy on a bike say to

another “how is it we live in this town and don’t know about the cool stuff going on?” Of course, we know something pretty cool has been going on here for a few centuries, but we also know we’re getting better at showing it off.

We’re a strong community because we value everyone. I want to be heard loud and clear on this: We value immigrants and their families, we celebrate their commitment to liberty and democracy in our shared celebration of El Grito on *dies y seis de Septiembre*: We value same-sex households and all individuals be they gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender; that is why we co-sponsor Gay Pride every year and have such a great time.

We value our military families, and celebrate the bravery of our homegrown hero Sergeant First Class Leroy Arthur Petry and thank him, and all of the men and women in the armed forces, for their service and their sacrifices. Please plan on attending the City’s Veteran’s Day event this November 11.

This is a community where we appreciate our differences. We value the diverse ethnicities, religions, experiences and points of view. Most of all, we appreciate hard work and the working families who make Santa Fe strong. Whether you work (or want to work) in small business, technology and science, hospitality, film, art and culture, health care, government or any other field, Santa Fe values hard work. We are the City of the Living Wage, we are a labor town who stood by our local Hospital and Health Care Workers Union to get good contracts, even while we work as community with Cristus St. Vincent to provide great health care for northern New Mexico and great local jobs.

Santa Fe is a place where we take care of the members of our community including the old, the young and the hardworking families. That’s why we put \$1.7 million dollars every year into the community through roughly 45 non-profits funded by our Community Services Department. The hard work of those non-profits, their great ideas and numerous connections, magnify the impact of each dollar. Our non-profit services including such community pillars as the Resource Opportunity Center, Solace, Esperanza and so many more make Santa Fe a great city as well.

We value the health of our citizens, which is why I’m proud that Santa Fe has been chosen as one of three pilot sites in the State for the National Diabetes Prevention Program. As the only municipality chosen, we can applaud the vision in providing wellness initiatives that address obesity and sedentary lifestyles.

Keeping our young people healthy and giving support to their families is always a priority. I’m proud to say that our youth programs are the best in the Southwest. The summer program provides seven weeks of learning, recreation, and meals for more than 900 children, at a cost of no more than \$160 per child. It gives parents a safe, healthy, educational option for children when school is out for the summer. In addition, the program provides summer jobs for teachers and high school students, both groups that are not particularly well-paid and often need to earn some summer money. For example, Chris Coriz, an automotive teacher with Santa Fe High School, has worked with the

Summer Youth Program since 1998 as a supervisor. The extra money he earned in the summer helped him purchase his first house through Homewise two years ago.

We value our seniors too. Santa Fe serves more than 65,000 hot meals in senior centers every year, and more than twice that--almost 200,000 meals--are delivered to seniors at home through the Meals on Wheels program. We also provided around 17,000 hours of in-home care for seniors who are alone or to give a break to family members who are taking care of a loved one. None of this could happen without the 570 senior volunteers who generously offer their time and energy to help others. Like Virginia Soto who helps at the Past tiempo Senior Center during meals and with special events for the holidays and at senior dances.

The city's commitment to creating, maintaining and improving open and public space continues. We have beautiful parks and great trails which help us to get outdoors and exercise, or play in a sports league, or get together with friends and family. Henry Lanman a Santa Fe Prep student recently saw one of his dreams realized in Alto Park. Through his vision, and with the help of the City staff and the Parks and Open Spaces Commission, we now have a pump track which will help bicyclists improve their skills and provide youth with another fun way to exercise.

Again this year, I am happy to report on the progress on our Living River initiative. With a more secure and diversified water supply we are better able to have a healthy river that supports wildlife, trees, vegetation and people throughout the central corridor of the city. For the fourth year in a row, we made sure that releases of water continue to help restore our river. Right now, there is major construction in the river between Camino Alire and Frenchy's Park. Banks are being stabilized and constructed rock formations in the river bed will slow flood waters which protects the entire living river ecosystem. A new section of the river trail is being completed and is already in use by neighbors and families. We are ready now to take the trail under Saint Francis Drive into our downtown and truly connect everyone along our living river.

The City of Santa Fe has been pretty stable even in the challenging economic climate. We have consistently managed our bond funds smoothly and efficiently. We recently got the news from Fitch Ratings that our water bonds are keeping a triple-A rating and bucking the national trend of many utility bonds being downgraded. This is because of sound financial management in our Water Division and because we now have the security of a dependable water supply with the Buckman Direct Diversion project. The Buckman project is an example of how in this city, in this community, we proactively determine our own destiny by investing and building the infrastructure we need to be secure now and to prosper in the future.

Managing the budget has been a difficult process full of tough decisions, but the hard work of city staff and city councilors has meant that we've kept the services and facilities that our citizens enjoy and rely on. And we've found ways to upgrade our infrastructure. We won't have the Rio Cerrillos anymore as a result of the Cerrillos Road Project. Our main commercial artery will finally have drainage for rain and snow which means fewer

potholes because water won't be sitting on the road, freezing and thawing. Bike lanes, bus pullouts and shelters, new landscaping and better sidewalks will all create a better environment for the businesses that have been so patient during the extensive roadwork.

Like the individuals, families and businesses who have had to tighten belts over the last few years, the City has had to do more with less. We've cut more than 70 positions, which has meant the workers that remain must find ways to be more efficient. Throughout the city there's a renewed emphasis on professionalism and responsiveness. The City Manager's ACT campaign, which stands for Accountability, Customer service and Transparency, has been in place for almost a year and we've seen it make a difference. The City of Santa Fe itself is a more streamlined organization and staff rise to the everyday challenges and work hard to effectively serve the public. I appreciate the hard work of the City employees, and all of the improvements that have been made this year. I have stood firm to protect their wages, healthcare for their families, and their security in retirement...because I know the work that City employees do is crucial to maintaining our amazing quality of life.

In our Land Use Department the thank you letters are put up on the wall to highlight when a job is well done and appreciated by the community. One letter from Douglas Maahs who owns an award winning remodeling company here wrote to say this: "I feel like we have a true partner in Santa Fe's future growth and vitality."

Our police force and fire department do the heavy lifting when it comes to keeping us safe. The burglary rate is dropping but will remain a focus of the police department. Also, we are finding more effective ways to combat drunk driving, especially for repeat offenders. Through our DWI forfeiture program, we are taking the weapon of drunk drivers away by seizing vehicles and auctioning them off.

Our first responders are world-class and consistently able to think creatively to solve real world problems. Recently, the fire department was the first on the scene where a drunk man was passed out in his car in the middle of the road. They had the foresight to put chocks under his tires, while waiting for the police to arrive. So, when he woke up and tried to drive off, he couldn't. Instead our police arrested him.

Our fire department also rose to the challenge this summer when we had unprecedented fires throughout the southwest, including in Los Alamos and in the Santa Fe National Forest. The City Fire Department leveraged a summer grant to hire 10 young firefighters for a wildland crew which fought an unprecedented 15 fires in their six months on the job. This crew brought in \$170,000 for their service. That money will now be used to hire a superintendent whose job will reduce our risk and improve our planning and response to fires in Santa Fe.

This community leads our country in so many ways. Our unemployment rate has dropped to 5.3%, which we recently learned is a factor that makes us ineligible for money from at least one federal program. So, we have to take care of things ourselves, and we will continue to do just that. We are maintaining funding for crucial economic

development programs like Youthworks and the Santa Fe Business Incubator. Our willingness to stay the course with these investments is paying off. Youthworks recently received a federal grant for almost a million dollars to design an educational and college prep program and to build affordable housing. That grant is due to the hard work of Melynn Skylar, Tobe Bott-Lyons and the rest of the crew at Youthworks. Also, the Santa Fe Business Incubator is waiting for the final documents on an expected grant of \$1.25 million to build a wet-lab for our growing cluster of biotech companies, so congratulations to Marie Longserre and the hard working staff at the Incubator. Both of these investments are bringing new money and jobs into our community.

We must continue to work together, as a community, to increase our security, to preserve our character, to improve our economy, to ensure that all of Santa Fe is safe and beautiful and that all of our valued citizens, organizations and businesses have more opportunities. We do what is necessary to make this a place where we all want to live.

I am so proud to be the Mayor of Santa Fe, especially as I consider all of our shared achievements. This community led the way to adopting the highest minimum wage in the country and we now have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

I'm proud to be the Mayor of a city with some of the most progressive affordable housing policies ever. We want people who work here to be able live here and thrive here, to raise their children here and grow old here. I'm proud that our policies have become on-the-ground reality, like the partnership between the City and Homewise that leveraged one-hundred thousand dollars of ARRA money to do six-hundred thousand dollars worth of energy improvements on Santa Fe homes. That's an example of this community identifying a need for investment and that investment is paying off with economic activity that directly impacts our local businesses and our local workforce. In Santa Fe we say "yes we can" not "no we can't".

This year we are benefiting from the vision of past leaders, advocates and policymakers. The Buckman Project began delivering safe drinking water, The Railyard is maturing into a beloved public space, this Convention Center has made the difference in attracting key events and great live music, Tierra Contenta has become a strong and vibrant part of the community. This City's investment in the College of Santa Fe has evolved into the Santa Fe University of Art and Design, with 460 students and more growth expected next year.

If we had shied away from tackling the challenges associated with any of these achievements, or had given up when the politics were difficult and the money was hard to find, we might well be in the same position so many other parts of our country are in now: climbing unemployment, severe cutbacks in public services, decaying infrastructure and loss of key industries. But because Santa Feans chose to make these investments, because of this community's vision and because of our will to take care of each other, we chose the harder but smarter road. That means we are again in a position to make important, needed investments in Santa Fe's future and to plan for decades of future prosperity.

Here is what we can do:

The Opportunity and Quality of Life Bond contains a portfolio of key projects that lay the foundation for enhancing our strong economy and maintaining our high quality of life.

Santa Fe can invest in growing permanent, high wage jobs and clean, sustainable industry. That's why we'll invest in broadband. We'll provide the infrastructure for really fast, robust connections to grow the innovative industries that are already here. We'll also work to make competitively priced broadband widely available. This new broadband infrastructure will ensure that businesses and consumers have plenty of options for connecting and staying competitive in the 21st Century.

We can build solar energy systems and make sure we invest in renewable energy. This is good for the environment, grows our local businesses and develops our workforce. I'm proud to say the City of Santa Fe has secured around 25% of PNM's current renewable energy credits....not bad for a town that's only 10% of PNM's service area. That's because we invested in solar for the Buckman Project, the Wastewater Treatment Facility, the Transit Division and now we're about to invest in solar for our Recycling and Transfer Station and for this Convention Center. We need to continue to invest in solar and renewable energy for the environment but more immediately because these projects lower operating costs while also building a skilled, green workforce in a developing industry and that's good for our economy. It can provide opportunity for young people like Doug Rael

We can invest in affordable housing for Santa Fe's workforce. We have some of the most innovative housing programs in the country, and incredible partners in Homewise, the Housing Trust and Habitat for Humanity. We've assisted more than 500 families with purchasing homes directly through City affordable housing programs, and helped create over 1000 affordable homes in Tierra Contenta. We now have more than 600 people actively working to buy an affordable home in Santa Fe. We can create opportunities with the partnerships of those families and will continue to use tools like down-payment assistance, financial education, rental subsidies and foreclosure prevention.

We can invest in our public transportation infrastructure. Quality public transportation makes Santa Fe more accessible for everyone. Public transportation makes Santa Fe more attractive to clean industries that pay high wages. We will grow Santa Fe as the transportation hub of Northern New Mexico and keep our community connected. We'll build a Transportation and Visitor Center in the Railyard. It will connect the Railrunner to local and regional buses and it will provide a place for bicycle and short-term car rentals and connect to Santa Fe's trail system. The visitor center will provide a gateway to Santa Fe and will direct visitors to our local businesses, attractions, events and activities.

We can invest in the south-west neighborhoods of Santa Fe. The New Mexican had an article about a month ago about Las Acequias Park; it is the only park in the part of town

where the largest number of young people live and go to school. And Las Acequias is being loved to death, it's overcrowded. Amazingly, Las Acequias Park is the last major park built in that area in over 20 years. We need another park in the southwest part of town. That's why we'll build SWAN, the Southwest Area Node Park, in Tierra Contenta. The park will be an important space for our young families, a place to build community, to be active and stay healthy.

As we build the new regional park for our young families, we can continue to build a world-class trail system. Trails now lead along the Acequia Madre and the Santa Fe River to St. Francis Drive. We can decide to provide safe bike and pedestrian trails under this giant roadway at these locations, as we did at the Arroyo Chamisa and truly connect Santa Fe's neighborhoods and business districts.

We can take the next steps in providing water security for the future by doing projects to improve our waterways and watershed. The arroyo improvement projects proposed will control erosion and prevent damage from storms to bridges, roads and homes; they will improve the native landscape for plants, wildlife and kids throughout Santa Fe and best of all they will provide for water to replenish our aquifers when we are blessed with rain and snow.

We can invest in community security by providing police and fire with the tools they need to continue to reduce crime, combat drunk driving and provide the fastest service possible to the sick and injured. We will complete a newly renovated police station and a new fire station. We will equip them both with state-of-the-art safety and crime fighting tools. Investment in public safety will help every Santa Fe resident feel safe in their home, business and neighborhood.

Now, is the time to invest in Santa Fe because Santa Fe is worth it. We have a community vision for a prosperous future, we know what infrastructure we need AND we have the opportunity to put people back to work on building that infrastructure. Our construction industry has been one of the hardest hit during the most difficult economic time since the Great Depression. The investments we make now will mean more jobs immediately and even more jobs and opportunity in the future. Let's put Santa Feans to work building the park, the police and fire stations, the transportation center, the broadband network, renewable energy systems and more.

We can do this because we are a community that looks to the future. We don't have to give in to the nay-sayers that are holding our economy hostage. This is not a community that is afraid to do the work to build prosperity. This is not a community afraid to do more for and with our friends, family and neighbors. This is a community where the government and the private sector work together. This is a strong, stable, healthy city. We are rich in blessings but we take nothing for granted.

As President Obama said in his speech to Congress about the American Jobs Act to "the question is whether, in the face of an ongoing crisis, we can stop the political circus and actually do something to help the economy...". In Santa Fe, we have the stability of a

creative economy, a diverse business sector and thousands of hard working families. In Santa Fe, we can actually do something to help our economy, to continue to provide opportunity and an improved quality of life.

Tonight I ask you to talk to other members of our community. Share your voice in the newspaper, on the radio, through social media, and with your family. Communicate with your elected officials, we can provide more opportunity and a higher quality of life, if the City Council will put these issues forward. So get your friends and neighbors excited about being a part of Santa Fe's future. I support investing in you and you and you and in all of us. I will work tirelessly with the community and my fellow elected representatives to put the Opportunity and Quality of Life Bond before the voters this coming March. Santa Fe can have a bold vision and realize it through bold investment in a prosperous future.

Let's start working on it right now. But first, please join me for a reception with refreshments provided by our Seniors Division.

Thank you very much.