Mayor Greg Stanton  
Inaugural Address  
January 3, 2012  
Transcript

Thank you all so very much. Governor Mofford, Congressman Pastor, Commissioner Kennedy, mayors, fellow council members, elected officials, friends of Phoenix, honored guests – thank you all for being here in this magnificent city – and in this historic theatre as we celebrate, once again – the magic of our democracy. (And Governor Mofford – it's a little early, but let me be the very first to wish you in this centennial year – a very Happy 90th birthday.)

To my wife Nicole, her parents Carol and Barney – and Carol, happy birthday. My beautiful children Trevor and Violet and to my family and friends – your love, support and faith will inspire me every day – and it always has.

Nicole, it's not easy to put up with a guy for a year in the middle of a heated campaign. The undeniable fact is that I wouldn't be standing here without you. Thank you for your commitment to Phoenix. And thank you for what you will do to stand up for kids who are the victims of school bullying – particularly our LGBT youth who need our support. I'm so very proud of you.

And I would be nothing at all – without you, Mom and Dad. Growing up, I watched both of you every day helping people who needed it most. You may not have known I was watching, but I was. And you may not have thought it had an impact on me, but it did. Mom and Dad, more than anything else, you gave me a special gift. You taught me that people matter.

And Mom, even though Alzheimer's has forced you to give your memories back to God too early, your beautiful heart is right here with us. And I will remember today for both of us.

Now, I am the one on stage today, but this day is really about all of us, and our shared vision for our city.

Over the course of the past year, I came to understand that not everyone was in my corner. Fair enough. But for the next four years, I will be in your corner.
Whether it's business owners, neighbors, artists, students, veterans, seniors, plumbers, pipe fitters, and others who build our community – we can never lose sight of the fact that people matter. They certainly matter to me.

So, to everyone who used to think you were on the outside of City Hall: you are now on the inside. You are now at the table.

Welcome to your Phoenix.

Our very name symbolizes our spirit. Ours is a continuing story of rebirth and renewal, especially during difficult and challenging times. And let's face it; Arizona has been hit harder by the ongoing recession than almost any other state. And we found out again the hard way – “subsidizing sprawl” is not smart economic development.

Too many people are still looking for work. Too many homes are still falling into foreclosure. And too many children still go to bed hungry in this city.

But even when our challenges are great, our shared sense of optimism for Phoenix – and for our shared future – remains strong. The promise of tomorrow still pulls us forward.

I am an unapologetic optimist. But my optimism is not based on some "Pollyanna" point of view. Rather, it's an optimism based upon experience and the confidence I have in the people in this room, the people of our city and our shared opportunity.

We know we can't do everything. No city can. So we must thoughtfully choose the right path. And we will.

Together we must take smart, creative steps toward a brighter, stronger future for our city. We will be guided by our common values, our common sense and, our selfless belief that we are all a small part of something much bigger than ourselves.

So yes, I'm an optimist. But if I've learned one thing in public service, I have learned that we are a city of optimists. And - we are a city that must lead.

Leading doesn't mean directing traffic in the way that it's already going. It means rising above personalities and politics – and finding the best path for tomorrow. Not the easiest, the best. Not the most popular, the best. Not the one that costs absolutely nothing, the one that is absolutely the best.

Phoenix should not wait for others to take that first step. To be our very best, the city of Phoenix should partner when it can – but move forward on its own when it must.

When I served on the Council, we did not wait for others to lead on a cutting-edge opportunity like TGen. We led. We didn't wait for anyone's permission to bring a university and a medical school to the center of our city. We did it. We led the way. And that leadership has produced real, tangible results that will pay long-term dividends for our city. It was Phoenix that
set the tone for moving our economy forward in the direction of bioscience, medical education and sustainable industries.

So much of our success can be found in the progress of our downtown. And everyone here knows a successful downtown is important to the economy of the entire state. I was proud to champion numerous downtown initiatives as a Councilman. And I know that a great downtown must not only be a center of commerce, arts and culture, and entertainment, but must also be a great neighborhood for those that live there and the thousands soon to come. I promise you today, I will enthusiastically continue to support our downtown as Mayor.

But economic development is not an “either/or” proposition. We don't need to choose one neighborhood over another – that is yesterday's model.

Today Maryvale, South Mountain Village, Arcadia, Moon Valley, North Phoenix...they don't compete with downtown. And downtown doesn't compete with them. They complement each other. We need strong, safe neighborhoods and economic success in every part of our city. For Phoenix to be a great city, each part must be successful. A great city should demand that its Mayor multi-task. And I will.

We have 500 square miles filled with opportunities. And wherever we find them – we need to grab them. Starting right now.

The very first thing I plan to do as Mayor is form a new, major collaboration with the Mayo Clinic, Arizona State University and our friends in the private sector to develop a major employment center – and a second biomedical campus for our city – on 600 acres in North Phoenix.

This “Desert Ridge Bio-science and Technology Collaborative” will support the continued development of Mayo Clinic's existing campus to its full capacity. It will build complementary uses around the campus that focus on higher education, research and development, and technology-based employment. The kind of jobs we will need to advance our city. Mayo is the very best at what they do and we need to leverage this opportunity to create long-term economic dividends for our kids and grandkids. The Mayo campus in Rochester, Minnesota, has 50,000 quality jobs. And if we plan and execute right, so will ours.

This is a pivotal moment for us. And what a loss it would be if we lacked the imagination to seize it. Because in partnership with our downtown campuses – including ASU, IGC, UofA, the Arizona Cancer Center, T-Gen and so many more – this is our best opportunity to successfully compete with cities that are leading in this area like San Francisco, Boston and Houston.

We must go big. And this is big.

Dr. Wyatt Decker, thank you for your innovative leadership at Mayo Clinic – and for Mayo's investment and long-term commitment to Phoenix.
Now I have a message this morning for our business leaders. I want to thank so many of you for standing up and speaking out last year to defeat divisive state legislation that would have hurt our economy and our community. You did the right thing.

And I say to every business leader, “As mayor, I have an open door, an open heart, and an open mind. I will embrace your best ideas – and I will work closely with you on creating high-quality jobs and moving our economy forward.” Because when you are actively and personally engaged in our community – we are a better community.

Look, I'm a local kid. While I was attending Cortez High School in West Phoenix back in the late 1980s, Barron's Magazine was writing an obituary for Phoenix. It was critical of our lack of economic planning and economic diversity – and pessimistic about our city's future. The very title of the article summed up their view: “Phoenix Descending: Is Boomtown USA Going Bust?”

Dear Barron's: We haven't gone bust. But we still have a ways to go.

After the article ran – we improved regional planning and economic development, but today, we still base too much of our economy on growth for growth's sake. Too many people still think our lack of economic diversity is OK. It's not.

It is not OK that when the rest of the country slides into recession – Phoenix slides further. That's why "Boom and bust, then repeat" – is not the best path we can choose. It's not the best economy we can create.

From this day forward, let's ensure every decision advances a relentless commitment to a more sustainable, diverse local economy for the people of Phoenix. And for our entire region and our state. We can't do it alone. We want all our neighboring cities to succeed – not because it's a benevolent thing to do – but because we cannot succeed without them.

So I won't waste my time thinking about competing with Glendale, Tempe and Mesa. That's self-defeating. Instead, I will partner with all the cities in our region and state to compete successfully with Shanghai and Frankfurt. I have full confidence we will succeed, but we can only succeed as a team. We will sink or swim as a region.

If we are to maximize our competitiveness, we need to invest in ourselves. One great way is to buy local. Local purchasing is about buying goods and services right here. It's about local jobs, and it's about supporting our people. And it's smart economic policy. And Mr. City Manager, when it comes to Phoenix buying local, we'll be talking.

But when it comes to supporting our schools – we need to do more than talk. Because while some question whether it's appropriate for the city to be involved in education – here's my question: How can we not be?
When one of our top employers of scientists and engineers says that if he had the decision to make all over again – he would never bring his business and its thousands of high-wage jobs to Arizona because of the lack of commitment to education – that is a call to action.

No one, and certainly not our city, can afford to sit on the sidelines. During my time as mayor, you will see me focus a lot of attention and action on supporting our schools. And I'm starting today by announcing a "Mayors' Futures Forum" for Education – where Arizona mayors from all across the state will use our Bully Pulpits to be Champions of our schools. Thank you – Mesa Mayor Scott Smith, Flagstaff Mayor Sara Presler, and Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild for already signing up.

Because Mayors really do understand that for people to matter, education must matter. Mayors know that economic success will be led by cities, and we cannot maximize our success without a renewed support for our schools. Mayors from across our state, please join us. And we cannot achieve full success as a city without a full commitment to sustainability. That means protecting our water, our air, our land, all essential components of environmental sustainability.

Solar is incredibly important to the future of the city, but it's just the beginning of the sustainability conversation, not the end. Sustainability must permeate every decision we make at the city. As a desert city, we have a unique obligation to be more sustainable and this commitment will be great for our economic future.

That's why I am reaching out to sustainability entrepreneurs like Miguel Jardin – whose business will create jobs and be a part of sustaining our city. Miguel believes that every human being can be well-fed, healthy, educated, and living to their highest potential. Miguel founded a company called VermaSoks, where he grows organic food – in places that you could never grow food before. Even in the summer in Arizona, it requires no digging, no tilling, no water. No kidding. Thanks Miguel for creating your business in Phoenix, and thank you for what you are doing to reduce hunger in Phoenix.

While we are talking about poverty and hunger, sustainability also means we support the people of our city, including the homeless. Because when we look at the faces of the homeless – we are looking right in the mirror, and but for the Grace of God go any of us. As mayor, I will lead the effort to end chronic homelessness.

I know personally the passion and professionalism of those who work to end homelessness. We can look for inspiration to people like Darlene Newsom, of UMOM – and her successful work with homeless families – particularly those with children. Thank you Darlene. Your work is important because people matter.

And you know who else matters? The people who work for our city. Phoenix is not a perfect city, but we are a well-run city because of the 14,000 employees who are not on this stage today. Their commitment – their professionalism – is a big part of what makes Phoenix, Phoenix. While you will never see their faces on the 6 o'clock news – they are real people, and they touch our lives every day.
The Head-Start worker who teaches children living below the poverty line how to read and write – she is a real person. So are the landscapers who endure the summer temperatures during the day – so our kids can play on soccer fields at night. And so are the librarians who help your kids and mine find the information they need for that big homework assignment – and somehow manage to do it all while whispering.

That's who city employees are. They are not political pawns and do not deserve to be treated as if they were.

By the same token, we will continue to place the highest value on public safety – and on the officers and fire fighters – who are city employees that put their lives on the line for the well being of others. They are the best at what they do and I am grateful for their service.

And when it comes to selecting a new Police Chief to lead the women and men in whose hands we place so much responsibility. I will insist that she or he absolutely reflects the professionalism of the Department, and the expectations of our diverse communities.

In all, Phoenix has a talented collection of professionals who show up for work on time, every day – and in their own individual ways, make real life a little bit better for everyone. They will never get rich, and don't expect to. But they love what they do, and they deserve our appreciation. They certainly have mine.

For all of us, we will structurally reform our employee compensation systems, and rid them of abuses. But let us make those reforms, including reforms to the pension system – in a smart and dignified way – without demonizing anyone. Our employees are partners, not adversaries. As stewards of the voters' trust, we owe them common-sense leadership, we owe them transparency and we owe them honor.

To that end, I will make our council meetings more accessible to the people we serve. We can do a better job of televising and streaming more of our meetings – and make better use of technologies like YouTube and Skype. And let's hold more meetings when people aren't at their own jobs. And let's make our website and public documents way more user friendly and searchable. It's about time and it's about your convenience, not ours.

I don't want to demonize lobbyists, but I do want the people of Phoenix to have full confidence that the decisions the city makes are in the public's interests, not special interests. So there is one corner of Phoenix that I believe should focus squarely on everyday citizens. That's why I will neither appoint – nor support the appointment of any lobbyist to any Board or Commission in the city of Phoenix. Because the more that everyday people get involved in city decision-making, the better off we'll be.

Even as our city population has grown – our city government has gotten smaller. But we can never use that as an excuse not to do big things for people. To achieve big things we must not engage in petty politics amongst ourselves. We have to be bigger than that. Because you matter.
Let me tell you what else matters to us, as a community. If we're going to attract and retain the very best scientists, doctors and entrepreneurs; if we're going to attract and retain the very best people – then Phoenix must remain an interesting place to live.

And that means we must support arts and culture in our city. It's not optional – it's a critical necessity for our economic future. From the Phoenix Art Museum to “Made” on Roosevelt Row. From the Phoenix Symphony to the Crescent Ballroom. And from the Musical Instrument Museum to the Calle Diez y Seis Mural Project – arts and culture matter. And they matter a lot.

Over the past year, I experienced the optimism we have in ourselves – and in the future of this city – from neighborhood to neighborhood, from street to street, from door to door. I talked a little. I listened a lot. And here's what I heard:

You are ready for Phoenix to emerge once again and be that land of opportunity that draws people from every corner of the country and every continent of the world. You are ready for a Phoenix that encourages business, promotes education, rewards hard work, supports the arts, makes smart choices, and embraces the diversity that has always made us strong. Because, to achieve our full success, Phoenix must be a welcoming place that embraces our diverse communities, our wonderful racial diversity and ethnicity; embraces our gay and lesbian residents, our seniors, our religious diversity and our disabled.

By example, Phoenix will soon be a majority Latino city. I recognize and embrace our diversity as a source of strength for our city. We must not allow the politics of the moment to harm this very strength. Christian, the young man who led us in the Pledge of Allegiance, he is a dream-act kid and he cares as much about the future of our city as anyone else. Phoenix is his home. With leaders like Christian, Phoenix has a very bright future.

We are here today because our city is at a crossroads. We are exceedingly grateful for our past, but ready to take on our future.

All the things that made us great are still great. But a great city is never finished. It's now time for Phoenix to set itself apart. Not just locally, but globally.

We need to be a truly International City – where the rest of the world wants to be. Not just for the sunshine, but because we do all the little things, and all the big things, right. And years from now, when one of today's students, perhaps one of your children or grandchildren is being sworn in as mayor or councilmember, we want them to be able to say that back in the day, back in our day, Phoenix made the right choices, the smart choices, that we championed transparency, openness and inclusion. That we put enough seats at the table for everyone.

We want them to say that we recognized and honored the value and dignity of all people. That we cared for, and about, the homeless and the hungry. That we partnered with all who shared our vision, and forged ahead on our own when we had to. That we made a commitment to focus on every square mile of our city, and that we expanded our view of "sustainability" and embraced our schools. That's what we want them to say.
And we want them to say that we led. So to my friends, colleagues, and partners, Vice Mayor Thelda Williams, Councilmembers Jim Waring, Bill Gates, Tom Simplot, Danny Valenzuela, Sal DiCiccio, Michael Nowakowski and Michael Johnson, I say I can't wait to get started working closely with you.

Because every day is a gift. Because every minute counts. And because every second matters.

Thank you so much – and may God continue to bless you all.