

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Tuesday, March 18th, 2025

Good evening,

Thank you all for joining us for this years “State of the City” Address. It is my honor to stand before you reflecting on the progress of our City. From the uncertainty of the pandemic, we have moved toward stability and strength for a thriving Modesto.

I would like to recognize my fellow Council Members – Rosa Escutia-Braaton, Eric Alvarez, Vice Mayor Nick Bavaro, Chris Ricci, Jeremiah Williams, and David Wright. Their tireless dedication to service is reflected in the long hours they spend listening and addressing the concerns of their constituents, each one of them seeks to improve the quality of life for residents and build trust with those they serve.

I would also like to recognize our Federal, State, and local representatives whose support and commitment to our community is appreciated.

- U.S. Senators Alex Padilla and Adam Schiff
- Congressmembers Adam Gray and Tom McClintock
- Governor Gavin Newsom
- Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis

- State Attorney General Rob Bonta
- State Controller Malia Cohen
- State Treasurer Fiona Ma
- Secretary of State Shirley Weber
- State Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil
- State Assemblymembers Juan Alanis and Heath Flora

Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

- Vito Chiesa
- Buck Condit
- Channce Condit
- Mani Grewal
- Terry Withrow

I want to acknowledge that the Supervisors and county employees attending here this evening will need to depart early to attend their meeting.

Our Mayors

- Ceres– Javier Lopez
- Hughson– George Carr
- Newman– Casey Graham
- Oakdale– Cherilyn Bairos

- Patterson– Michael Clauzel
- Riverbank– Rachel Hernandez
- Turlock– Amy Bublak
- Waterford– Charlie Goeken

*School Board Members

A special thanks to our City Manager, Joe Lopez, and his committed team of professionals that keep our City running every day. They make it look easy, but we know how challenging it can be. Thank you, Joe, and City staff!

I would also like to thank our City Clerk Diane Nayares-Perez, City Attorney Jose Sanchez, and our City Auditor Colleen Rozillis, who work tirelessly to support our city and Council. Thank you.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my husband and my entire family. Their continued love, support, and encouragement have carried me through every day. My accomplishments as the Mayor of Modesto are as much yours as mine.

As I began my first term as Mayor, our community was recovering from a pandemic, a global situation that impacted all aspects of our lives: health, education, safety, our economy, and our government.

In early 2022, our Council supported exploring the idea of a possible sales tax ballot measure. The bottom line was the City of Modesto had a need for more services, with significant cuts being made to every portion of the budget.

The Council had no choice but to advocate for and support a proposal for an increase in sales tax to meet these needs.

Measure H, the voter approved one-cent, general sales tax is an actionable voter initiative that has impacted our City in so many ways. From pruning a tree to funding a comprehensive park renovation, no matter the size of these projects, each one of them is an advancement for a better Modesto.

In April of 2023, the City began collecting this sales tax revenue. Through the development of quick wins, we started with a short-term plan, then a comprehensive plan that would sustain a higher standard of living for all residents. Measure H brings in approximately \$48 million annually. This funding is critical to the goal of providing improved and sustainable services to the residents of Modesto.

One of the biggest impacts Measure H has had within the Modesto Police Department is increased staffing; since going into effect, Measure H funding has helped hire 51 employees. There's also been a focus on

staffing for the Real Time Crime Center, a valuable public safety resource that enables staff to quickly see and analyze situations using technology to provide real-time data and live feeds from surveillance cameras and license plate readers. This enables faster decision-making and deployment of officers and emergency services throughout Modesto.

There has also been increased staffing for the Code Enforcement Team to help tackle blight in the community. In addition, there's funding allocations for six new Park Rangers. We have also increased staffing with the Community Health and Assistance Team (CHAT); we currently have 11 CHAT officers, who have been instrumental in providing care and services for those experiencing homelessness; last year, they contacted 3,051 people and provided 6,693 services to those in need.

The Modesto Fire Department is also getting a big boost thanks to Measure H and is helping save lives in critical moments where every second matters. They used Measure H funding to purchase six Life Pak defibrillators, a clinically advanced, lifesaving device that is designed to quickly improve a cardiac patient's chance of survival. They also purchased six Lucas Devices, a medical device that provides mechanical chest compressions to patients in cardiac arrest.

Measure H funding was used to purchase five fire engines and two fire

trucks that will allow the Fire Department to respond quickly when disaster strikes, where every second counts. How often does that happen? Let's break down 2024: there were 34,051 calls for service; including over 26,000 emergency medical service calls and more than 1,800 fires... 213 of which were structure fires.

This year, the Modesto Fire Department will celebrate 150 years of service in our City and region. While we celebrate their history, Measure H is helping us focus on the future by providing funding towards renovating the city's oldest fire station, which was built in 1939. Rehabilitating Fire Station One is more than just a necessary upgrade, it is an investment in the safety, resilience, and prosperity of the entire community and directly benefits all residents in Modesto. After all, Fire Engine One was the busiest engine in 2024, responding to 5,358 separate calls over the course of the year – that's almost 15 calls every day.

We are addressing homelessness with an energetic partnership with the Downtown Streets Team. The Downtown Streets Team is comprised of individuals experiencing homelessness who volunteer to clean streets, parks, waterways, and other public spaces while they rebuild their lives. In the last year, they had a total of 75 Team Members, who contributed 3,885 volunteer hours that resulted in 353,813 pounds of trash being cleaned up.

They also removed over 400 needles from streets and parks, positively impacting our community's health and safety. I am also proud to share that 23 Team Members have successfully transitioned into permanent housing.

The City has also unlocked the door and expanded affordable housing options with an Accessory Dwelling Unit Revolving Loan Fund program. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) have become a critical part of our community's housing stock. Passed by the City Council in late 2024, the zoning code amendment brings Modesto's Municipal Code in line with recent changes to State law governing ADUs. At the same time, a partnership with Valley First Credit Union (VFCU) will make financing the construction of an ADU easier for Modesto residents. A \$450,000 Revolving Loan Fund will provide loans up to \$50,000 at fixed interest rates, up to five points below Wall Street Prime Rate, and fixed terms up to 120 months.

Measure H funding has significantly impacted Modesto's urban forestry. Over the past two years, the Forestry Division of the City's Public Works Department has pruned over 26,000 trees, removed over 2,000 dead trees and planted over 700 trees. People can request a new tree or a tree replacement, helping to beautify our community and bring Modesto neighborhoods to life, one tree at a time.

Speaking of beautification, we are proud to highlight that the passage of Measure H significantly strengthened the City's Blight Abatement efforts. Programs like Downtown Modesto Partnership, the Downtown Streets Team, Love Modesto, Dry Creek Trail Coalition, and Operation 9-2-99 are greatly appreciated. A new campaign, called **Mo'Beautiful**, was created to encourage us to take pride in our homes, our neighborhoods, and our community.

Modesto **Mo'beautiful** is a call to action for residents to unite to create a cleaner, safer, and more beautiful Modesto. Community engagement is crucial in inspiring a movement to preserve Modesto's grace and appeal.

Parks are the heart of our community where families gather, play, and relax. They are safe spaces for hosting parties, BBQs on a cool spring day or movies on a hot summer evening after a long day of swim lessons. The infrastructure improvements and updates to our parks are some of the most recognizable features of how Measure H has impacted our community. Six parks received new playgrounds; fun can be heard at Aqueduct, City Gate Children's, Lakewood, Riverside, and Mildred Perkins parks, and work is still underway at Orchard Park, which is expected to be completed this month.

The César E. Chavez Park Renovation Project is under construction and is the largest park renovation project in the City of Modesto. This fantastic achievement took a lot of work over the last six years to come to fruition. We are excited to see this be completed in the Spring of 2026.

Additional parks and recreation improvements funded by Measure H include:

- Basketball Court Resurfacing at 12 parks.
- Tennis Court Resurfacing at 15 courts at three parks.
- Park identity sign replacements and installation at nine parks.

Other projects are in the beginning stages for development in 2025:

- Tennis Court Lighting at Davis and Beyer Parks
- Restroom Replacements at Graceada, Mark Twain, and Robertson Road Parks
- The full renovation of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Park, highlighted by a Multi-Purpose Building, Basketball Court and Baseball Field.
- New Park Security Lighting at James Marshall, Robertson Road, Chrysler Parks, Muncy, Sutter, and Riverside Parks
- Additional Basketball Court Resurfacings at Revard and Pike Park

- Additional Playground Replacements at Coleman Brown, Eisenhut, Sutter and Brewers Rose Parks.

How can we continue this great work in our community? Support local businesses! The Community and Economic Development department has been steadfast in supporting small businesses, attracting new businesses to Modesto, and contributing to the economic growth of our community. One new way we are supporting small businesses is a partnership with Valley First Credit Union. In 2024, the City Council approved a Modesto Forward Grant agreement with Valley First Credit Union, using \$1 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds. This agreement provides two revolving loan funds that will expand capital access for small businesses in Modesto. The purpose of these loans are small business development and business beautification. This collaboration represents a significant step towards addressing the financial barriers that have historically impeded our local businesses. These loans range from \$2,500 to \$75,000 with repayment terms from 12-60 months and the interest rates are at five points below prime with a floor of 2.5% Annual Percentage Rate (APR).

The City is creating opportunities for economic growth, and I am so proud of our City, for supporting small businesses. Every dollar spent in Modesto makes a difference.

Recently, a bond rating upgrade was assigned to the City of Modesto. This is a direct reflection of the City's commitment to strong financial management. This accomplishment was made possible by the dedicated actions of you, the voters, and the City Council, to improve our financial standing. The Council's commitment never wavered in ensuring the financial stability of the City of Modesto, and we are now seeing the positive impacts of decisions that have paved the way for financial stability for years to come.

With the support of all departments, we seamlessly provide essential services to all residents. Our Information Technology Department ensures all city systems operate on a secure and efficient digital platform. The Utilities Department maintains the City's clean water supply and manages the infrastructure that supports services like water treatment plants and sewage systems.

We are also working towards enhancing communications strategies to share information ensuring residents know what services and programs are available and how to access them.

We are working on a Safe Streets for All Initiative to address traffic safety and car crashes, as well as updating our General Plan, which hasn't

been updated since 1995. Incredible things are happening. So incredible, in fact, that we have received recognition at the state level.

The City of Modesto was the recipient of three out of only 12 prestigious Helen Putnam Awards for Excellence awarded last year. Considering there are 482 cities in California, this is a remarkable achievement.

The Modesto Police Department received one award for their work by providing a Student Engagement Officer, Sean Dodge, who coordinated the yearlong 10 K with a Cop initiative. They also received a second award for the Healthy Room Project, designed to provide safe and supportive living spaces.

The Community and Economic Development Department received the third award for the City's Partnership with Downtown Streets team which, as highlighted earlier, supports those experiencing homelessness with critical case management, housing navigation, and housing placement services.

Modesto is not only a community of support, but we are also a community of giving and our most bountiful resource in our community is our people. Every day, I meet people that shine and love our community. Some people have made a lasting impact not only in our community but for

the greater good of our state and our nation. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to speak with many individuals whose legacy touches the service we provide to the residents every day.

I met with lifetime Modesto resident Valerie Brown Pierson, daughter of Ralph Brown. The Brown family first came to Modesto in 1910; Ralph was elected to the California State Assembly in 1943. In 1953, he authored the Brown Act, a California law that guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies. Every City Council meeting adheres to the Brown Act, including this one. His legacy will live on forever.

I also spoke with Tony Coelho, who represented California's 15th District in the House of Representatives, which included Modesto. In 1989, Tony Coelho introduced the Americans with Disabilities Act that was signed into law in 1991. Just imagine all of the people who have had access to an open government because of these two people.

These are just two examples of the magnificence each one of us is capable of. We have a strong community and I believe we will continue to work diligently together to make an even more prosperous Modesto.

Today is about you, the voters. You approved Measure H, these are your highlights, your wins.

Thank you.

Here is a short film that will help us see the impacts of Measure H in our city, Modesto!