

City Councilman Tom Simplot District 4 Inaugural Address

Jan. 3, 2006

Thank you Mayor Gordon.

It is impossible to approach an occasion like today without first reflecting on the path that led us here, and the people who walked that path with us...literally, knocking on doors.



First, I want to thank my number one campaign volunteer and partner in life - David Smith. I know that everyone on this stage would agree, we could not do this without the support of our families.

I also want to thank my colleagues. It has been a pleasure to work with you these past two years, and I look forward to the next four. You are an amazing group.

When I was first elected two years ago, I promised to work on the issues which are important to District 4, and to get things done. To do that, I knew I needed the best staff, and with all due respect to some folks who work on the 11th floor, I have the best staff anyone could ask for. Alma Hernandez, Rory Blakemore, Matthew Heil and Rose Ferguson, thank you for all you do.

District 4 is a very diverse district, stretching from 24th Street to 51st Avenue, Bethany Home on the north to Van Buren on the southwest side. The issues facing our residents are as diverse as the demographics, yet there are some issues that simply transcend everything: building and maintaining strong neighborhoods, building a sense of community and fighting crime.

In a short two years, with a lot of help and support from residents and city of Phoenix employees, we have been able to check a few things off our list: a new pedestrian bridge at McDowell and 35th Avenue, thanks in great part to Congressman Ed Pastor; a new learning center also being built at McDowell and 35th Avenue, on the site of a horrible fire which claimed the life of a Phoenix firefighter Brett Tarver; a new city park being built on McDowell and 32nd Avenue, on the site of a former EPA clean-up site; and a new senior center being built at 43rd Avenue and Thomas. All of these projects became a reality in the past two years, and it is due to a focused vision of our Maryvale and Isaac area neighbors.

In addition, for the past two years we have hosted District 4 Crime Summits, where residents have real input into what changes they need in their neighborhoods, and we have helped organize crime marches with groups like NAILEM and other groups where residents march together to reclaim their neighborhoods. We have also created free outdoor movies at no taxpayer expense at Steel Indian School Park, where hundreds of families gather to greet their friends and neighbors, and we have raised private dollars to build a new dog park at Steele Park.

Yet we have far to go.

We know that our crime rate is linked to an insidious drug called crystal meth. It is destroying our community, one by one, and we cannot let it go unchecked.

I am proud to serve as co-chair of the Council's Crystal Meth Task Force with my colleague, Dave Siebert. This task force includes people from throughout numerous communities: the drug and alcohol treatment community, the faith-based community, the gay/lesbian community and others. We know it takes more than a city ordinance to beat this drug. We know it will take statewide action, public education and a real treatment plan for those not yet lost. And this City Council is committed to addressing this issue.

As difficult as some of the issues may be that face us, we also see wonderful issues just over the horizon: a new ASU downtown campus, a new UA Medical School, and the issue tying it together: light rail, which cuts right through the middle of District 4. It's going to be a tough few years while it's built, but when it's done, our city will be forever changed. Let's focus on the future by redeveloping central Phoenix and building our tax base from within.

As I look forward to the next four years of public service, I am mindful of the writings of Andy Warhol who said, "They always say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."

I look forward to working with all of you so that we can change things for the better.

Thank you.