



## State of the City: Choi pushes for tech hub, library

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Mayor Steven Choi wants to transform Irvine into a hub for technology companies and is establishing a committee to raise money for a metropolitan library at the Great Park, he announced in his second State of the City address.

Calling it "Irvine Tech Valley," Choi envisions an internationally recognized environment where technology companies can collaborate and innovate.

In his address Tuesday night, Choi said Irvine is an ideal location for such a hub – with good weather, high quality of life, major research university UC Irvine and several other University of California campuses nearby.

UC Irvine already has plans of its own to match the region's entrepreneurial spirit. Just hours before the address, UCI Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Howard Gillman announced the creation of the Institute for Innovation, an interdisciplinary center that will help transform research ideas into real-world applications.

Choi noted that the shift toward technology hubs already is happening in the private sector.

In January, Irvine businessman Peter Polydor founded the Eureka Building, a microcosm of what Choi wants to see throughout the city. The 3-acre campus is a shared space for startups and entrepreneurs to work together.

Choi also emphasized that the right infrastructure would entice companies to set up shop in Irvine. He said he is encouraging the Irvine Co. and FivePoint Communities to offer rental spaces that would be attractive to tech companies. A few weeks ago, he met with wireless service providers on how to improve cell signals citywide.

### Library dream still alive

Not much has happened since Choi expressed last year his dream to build a major library at the Great Park.

But Choi returned to the idea this year, announcing that he is creating a Library Foundation Steering Committee to raise funds for construction.

His proposed location is the park's Cultural Terrace, which could be shared with an amphitheater, museum of Heritage and Aviation and an Arts and Culture Exhibition Center.

The Cultural Terrace has yet to find a funding partner.

### What happened in 2013

Choi lauded the accomplishments of the city and local businesses in the last year, underscoring his commitment to fiscal conservatism.

"We can only accomplish what we do from a position of financial strength and fiscal responsibility," he said.

Rainy day reserves are at 16 percent of general fund expenditures, sales tax revenue increased 3.7 percent, hotel tax revenue jumped 6.1 percent, and the city's assessed valuation grew 5 percent.

The unemployment rate sits low at 4.2 percent – a percentage point drop from last year.

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