

# Lenexa State of the City Address

Good afternoon and thank you for attending today's State of the City address.

Each year at this time we take the opportunity to reflect on what makes Lenexa special, what projects and events have shaped the last year, and what do we see on the horizon that will impact our community?

I am proud to offer this State of the City address for the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year and share some of the great things happening in our community. I am glad we are gathered in this wonderful new facility and are able to host this important event in Lenexa.

It's an exciting time in Lenexa's history. Our population continues to grow as word spreads that Lenexa is an exceptional place to live and work. According to the Census Bureau, during the last five years for which data is available, Lenexa's growth rate is the highest in the state of Kansas. Many factors contribute to why Lenexa is held in such high regard.

We have strategically managed Lenexa's growth and try to make certain that each action we take is for the benefit of the community as a whole. City Council members listen carefully to resident input and strive to ensure resources are given to the priorities identified. Our professional staff members are devoted public servants, who consistently look for ways to better serve our stakeholders. Our residents and businesses do care about this community.

In 2016, Lenexa was a national finalist in the *Engaging Local Government Leaders Contest*, for best overall social media presence by a local government. Ultimately, we were identified as one of the top four in the nation in this category. As part of the contest, people were asked to finish the statement "I Stand Behind the City of Lenexa Because..." We included many of those statements in the slideshow running during lunch, but I wanted to share six of these statements with you now that demonstrate what makes Lenexa special according to the community: I Stand Behind the City of Lenexa Because ...

"It has been a wonderful place to raise a family and put down roots. Great city planning years ago has led to great neighborhoods – a very well-run city."

"It is a small town within the city. I love having access to beautiful parks and city activities. But most of all, I love the people who care about their neighbors and their city."

"Lenexa has the best police force ever! Dedicated, helpful, courteous and community builders. Thank you for serving and keeping us safe."

"I love that I can see where my tax dollars are going when my street gets repaved in the summer and plowed in the winter. When my sidewalk gets fixed, when our parks are continually improved, and when our employees are happy and helpful."

"The Governing Body and city officials of Lenexa are always responsible to citizens and work hard to provide an excellent quality of life and fun things to do in our community." ... and finally

The "I Like Lenexa" slogan really sells the city short, but fits on a bumper sticker better than "I freaking love Lenexa." Lenexa is the best community I've ever lived in and I feel very connected to my city because of all the festivals, parks and activities."

Please direct your attention to the 2016 Year in Review report at your table entitled "Framing Lenexa's Future." You are the first to see this publication, which outlines successes of the past year, using the six goals of the Governing Body as our guide. During today's address, I will share examples of how we are striving to meet those goals.

The first goal outlined in the Year in Review is fiscal responsibility. As elected officials, we understand that our citizens have entrusted us with valuable resources. We know it's essential to maintain long-term financial stability while providing an exceptional value for citizens.

I am pleased to report that Lenexa continues to have a strong financial position. We consistently spend within our means while maintaining healthy reserves to meet unexpected challenges.

Our triple-A bond ratings from credit agencies are a testament to our financial strength and help save thousands of dollars in interest expense when selling bonds to finance capital projects. A special shout out to Doug, Jill, and the finance department for their expertise and stewardship.

Our professional staff constantly looks for ways to save money. Cindy Harmison and the Legal Department secured a seven percent premium decrease for our property and liability insurance renewal in 2016.

In another example, we are switching to LED light bulbs in streetlights and trail lights where possible. Last year, we converted trail access lighting along Prairie Star Parkway and other locations throughout the city, resulting in an 80% savings on that portion of our electric bill.

Our Fire Department partnered with neighboring communities to receive grant dollars to replace protective breathing equipment used when firefighters work in dangerous areas.

These are just a few examples of the diligent efforts of our staff to make sure your tax dollars are maximized, and where possible, use other people's money.

The second goal is to ensure that city services assist in creating a superior quality of life and a safe atmosphere where people want to live, work and play.

Every city department has a hand in helping achieve this goal, and the examples are endless.

Both our Police and Fire Departments are recognized as leaders in their fields and help create a safe atmosphere in Lenexa. Their work is guided through comprehensive strategic plans, and both departments use the latest technology to accomplish their work.

The Police Department implemented a new mental health co-responder program last year. This allows a licensed professional to accompany police officers on calls involving mental health situations. We partner with Johnson County Mental Health and the City of Shawnee on this successful program.

In a matter of weeks, you will see a redesigned website when you visit Lenexa dot com. The new site will be easier to navigate — especially on mobile devices — and features updated information on every department.

Our residents continue to tell us that maintaining quality infrastructure is a priority. We invested 4.4 million dollars in roadway improvements in 2016 through our Pavement Management Program and will continue to be aggressive in these efforts in the coming years.

I am pleased to report that our Municipal Services Department was re-accredited in 2016 by the American Public Works Association. We also welcomed a new leader for this department as Nick Arena was promoted to Municipal Services Director.

One of most notable projects of the year was completion of phase two of the Johnson County Gateway Project to improve the K-10 / I-435 / I-35 interchange. The largest highway project in KDOT history, the project had a major impact on Lenexa as 95<sup>th</sup> Street and I-35 was reconfigured into a diverging diamond interchange, improving access, safety, and saving significant resources with this design.

We celebrated the opening in August of last year and while we are glad to see this massive project in the rearview mirror, we know the long-term benefits outweigh the short-term challenges brought on by a project of this complexity.

A good transportation system is critical to attracting more companies and jobs to our community. Lenexa invested \$11 million dollars to improve the 95<sup>th</sup> Street and I-35 interchange, and we are seeing the fruits of that investment in the form of new development. We thank KDOT and all of those who worked on the Gateway project for a great partnership.

Our third goal addresses one of the most important things that defines Lenexa — our sense of community.

Our strong tradition of hosting outstanding festivals continued in 2016 and we saw increased attendance at all events. We celebrated the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Lenexa BBQ Battle, the 30<sup>th</sup> year of the Lenexa Chili Challenge, as well as the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the Lenexa Artists' Show.

We also introduced new programs this year, including Poetry Open Mic Nights, Growing Gardeners for kids, and a Citizens Fire Academy.

We added to our public arts collection with the debut of "Amusing Breeze," a colorful new piece created by local artist, Chris Duh. The 20-foot-tall sculpture is located in Sar-Ko-Par Trails Park at 87<sup>th</sup> and Greenway.

We also began filming a series of videos to help share the story of Lenexa's history. These videos are told through the eyes of Lenexa founder Octave Chanute, as portrayed by local historian and former Parks & Recreation Director, Bill Nicks. Let's take a few minutes to preview one of the films.

In all, there will be more than a dozen videos, which will tie to a Lenexa history marker at the new civic campus in City Center.

Our fourth goal challenges us to promote and stimulate quality development to enhance the city's diverse economic base.

People and businesses continue investing in Lenexa. We have seen four consecutive years of steady growth in building permit activity, and set a new record for construction valuation last year at \$322.8 million dollars in permit value. During the last four years, our total construction valuation has topped one billion dollars – that's billion with a "B", and based on the current pipeline, we are in for another big year. You will find a list of the largest projects in the Year in Review document, and will note a broad mix of commercial, industrial, and hotel investments.

Our residents continue to seek a variety of housing options to meet their needs. New single family home development in central and western Lenexa continued at a strong pace in 2016. In addition, developers are building multi-family and senior living communities to keep pace with the un-met demand identified in a housing study we completed in 2016.

The fifth goal calls for us to reinvest in our community. Old Town Lenexa is one of our most prized and historic areas, and we spent significant time in the past year focusing on its future.

With the help of grant funds from the Mid-America Regional Council, we developed an action plan to highlight revitalization opportunities in Old Town. We were pleased with the high level of citizen participation throughout the process.

Last summer, the City Council accepted the final concept plan and a list of recommendations for the private property owners, merchants, and the city to pursue. These groups will continue to work together to identify funding and keep the plan moving forward in the coming years.

Over the past 30-years, the city has leveraged federal dollars through the Community Development Block Grant program to bring nearly all city owned public streets in Old Town up to current development standards including storm sewers, curb and gutter framed streets, and sidewalks. This year, we celebrate the end of this program with completion of 95<sup>th</sup> Terrace and Haskins Street.

With this effort now complete, we are redirecting federal funds from the CDBG program to a new grant-based system to assist low- and moderate-income homeowners with exterior repairs. Together with our exterior grant program and the neighborhood revitalization district, these resources help homeowners make needed repairs and strengthen existing neighborhoods.

Continuing to leverage other people's money, we received another grant from Mid-America Regional Council that will allow us to study land uses and multimodal transportation opportunities along the Quivira Road corridor from 79<sup>th</sup> to 99<sup>th</sup> streets. This is an important section of our community and we look forward to creating an updated plan for the area.

Developers are using city-approved tax increment financing to assist with redevelopment in the vicinity of the 95<sup>th</sup> Street and I-35 interchange. We look forward to welcoming three new hotels – a Holiday Inn Express, a Best Western Plus, and an extended stay Candlewood Suites – to the area soon.

Finally, Block Real Estate Services is developing a new luxury apartment complex at 83<sup>rd</sup> Terrace and Quivira Road. Known as the WaterSide Residences, this 377-unit complex is the first residential project built in eastern Lenexa in nearly two decades. Phase one of the project is complete and leasing is going well.

Now we turn to Lenexa City Center. The sixth goal centers on creating a premier destination that will serve as a community gathering place.

This is an exciting time for Lenexa City Center and I could have spent this entire speech talking about it given all of the activity in the area. I will recap some of the highlights, and you can find more information in the Year in Review report.

In 2016, we celebrated the grand opening of the Lenexa Conference Center and Hyatt Place Hotel and are glad to host today's event at this outstanding new addition to our community.

We also saw the completion of The Domain at City Center, an upscale multifamily community developed by EPC Real Estate Group. Another luxury complex – EdgeWater at City Center – is nearing completion. Leasing in both of these communities has been strong.

Several City Center projects began construction in 2016. The first phase of Penrose Place began last year at westbound 87<sup>th</sup> Street Parkway and Penrose Lane. The first phase includes a Spring Hill Suites Hotel by Marriott, 5,000 square feet of retail space, and a parking deck.

Ignite Wood Fire Grill is a new restaurant that will open this spring and is located immediately north of our location today. This Latin-inspired restaurant will feature a traditional Mexican and South American menu with a Midwestern influence. This project is a partnership between Dennis Eskie and Associates, and Saints Pub and Patio owner Scott Anderson.

The District at City Center is a mixed-use development by EPC Real Estate and Copaken Brooks. The development, located across Penrose from the Civic Center,

will include residential, office and retail space. Construction is scheduled to begin later this spring.

Oddo Development received plan approval for Sonoma Plaza, a 40-acre site which will include restaurants and retail. This high-profile location is one of the few remaining large tracts inside the I-435 loop just east on 87<sup>th</sup> Street.

Oddo will also develop the adjacent 45 acres on the south side of the property with a combination of upscale apartments, senior living, and office uses.

Infrastructure work has started and streets are in for the Fairways at City Center, an 80-unit twin villas project, located along the Canyon Farms Golf Course and within walking distance of City Center. Home construction is expected to begin soon. Speaking of Canyon Farms, the golf course clubhouse is now under construction as well.

The tremendous amount of activity in this area caught the attention of Ride KC, which extended its 95<sup>th</sup> Street bus route in Johnson County to include Lenexa City Center. Transit service now connects Lenexa residents and businesses to the rest of the Kansas City region between the Waldo neighborhood in Kansas City and Lenexa City Center.

The new route, which was not previously served by transit, also will provide regional connections to downtown Kansas City and the Country Club Plaza.

The City is partnering with other public institutions on important projects that will bring exciting activity to Lenexa City Center.

The Shawnee Mission School District's competitive aquatic stadium will be located across the street from the Lenexa Rec Center. It is being designed to attract local, state and regional swim meets, with seating for more than one thousand people. Construction is slated to begin later this year.

We were pleased with the Shawnee Mission School District's decision to locate a new elementary school near City Center. Lenexa Hills Elementary will be on the northwest corner of 87<sup>th</sup> Street Parkway and Haven Street and will open in August of next year.

The Lenexa City Center branch of the Johnson County Library will be immediately south and adjacent to the new Lenexa City Hall. This 40,000-square-foot facility will bring thousands of visitors to City Center, and the Library will be an exceptional partner for programs and activities. We anticipate construction beginning late this year or early in 2018.

We are particularly excited to share the progress of the new civic campus at the heart of Lenexa City Center.

We've made tremendous progress on the site and anticipate opening the complex during a ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 31. Please mark your calendar now and plan to attend. Planning is underway for a community celebration, worthy of this once-in-a-generation project, for the month of September. A citizen advisory committee has been assembled and is working with staff to create activities to highlight each part of the new civic campus.

I thought you would enjoy seeing a few of the renderings of the buildings and what construction looks like today.

The first slide details the overall site plan which includes the Lenexa Rec Center, City Hall, and the 500-space garage. Please note the location for the new Lenexa City Center Library. And this slide provides a view of the construction project in progress. These facilities will open this summer.

The Lenexa Public Market is located on the first floor of City Hall and will be filled with local entrepreneurs and culinary artisans.

The first five tenants to anchor the Lenexa Public Market include The Roasterie, Foo's Fabulous Café, Topp'd Pizza and Salad, Lenexa Locale — a full service bar from the owners of Martin City Brewing Company, and Marilyn's Mad Treats — a dessert bar and soda fountain.

The Lenexa Public Market will be the only fully indoor public marketplace in the Kansas City area. When fully leased, the Lenexa Public Market will be home to approximately 15 permanent merchants, with space also available for pop-up vendors. Interest in the market has been amazingly strong and we will announce additional merchants in the coming months.

This photo shows an illustration of the exterior of the Public Market and what it looks like now.

This is the rendering of the Public Market interior and this is what that space looks like today.

From the beginning of the civic campus project, we envisioned partnering with a university to offer classes at City Hall. We knew this added activity would bring

energy to the space, increase our evening population, and exhibit our mixed-use vision for City Center.

We are in final contract negotiations with our university partner and will make the formal announcement soon.

But, we wanted to let you in on the secret. Park University, one of the most well-respected higher education institutions in our area, will operate a campus center in City Hall. We are pleased to welcome President Greg Gunderson and other representatives of Park University joining us today. Dr. Gunderson, we truly are excited about our partnership and look forward to welcoming students to the Lenexa campus soon.

The remaining part of the city hall facility will be filled with city offices, a 250-seat community forum, and an art gallery. All of these spaces will allow us to better serve our citizens in a 21<sup>st</sup> century setting.

The Lenexa Rec Center encompasses the western part of the site and includes three multi-use gymnasiums, fitness facilities, a large walking track and an indoor aquatic center.

This slide is the concept drawing of the aquatics area; and how it looks today.

The aquatics area features a zero depth entry pool with an interactive play structure, two 40-foot tall slides, a lazy river, a deep-water well with a diving platform and 20-foot climbing wall, a warm water wellness pool, and three lanes for swimming laps.

The Rec Center also features a full-service fitness floor, three group fitness studios, two full-size courts for basketball and volleyball, and a 1/6<sup>th</sup> mile elevated walking track – complete with grade change – and, incredible views of all interior features along with the golf course and developing areas of city center.

This entire complex was designed to serve our citizens and create a destination that will truly make a positive impact on their lives.

As you can see, 2016 was an eventful and rewarding year in Lenexa. We are making great progress on achieving the six Governing Body goals. I extend my gratitude to everyone who works tirelessly to make Lenexa such an outstanding community.

Thank you to the members of the Lenexa City Council for their leadership and commitment. A special shout out to former Council Member Diane Linver who stepped down from her seat at the end of 2016. Diane faithfully served Lenexa for 28 years and made a lasting impact on our community.

Diane's departure elevates Councilman Tom Nolte to the patriarch and historian of the council with 22-years of service.

We received 8 applications from residents of Ward 2 seeking appointment to fill the remainder of Diane's term.

Applications and resumes have been reviewed; with assistance from Blake Schreck, interviews have been completed; and we can't begin to tell you how impressed we are with the candidates. Each is committed to Lenexa and would make excellent representatives for our citizens. My recommendation will be revealed at the February 21 council meeting for council approval.

I would also like to congratulate Council Member Andy Huckaba -- who was honored with the 2016 E.A. Mosher *Excellence in Local Government Award* presented by the League of Kansas Municipalities.

This award is presented to elected city officials who have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the city they serve, an active commitment to strong local government, and service to the League of Kansas Municipalities.

Andy joins Councilwoman Diane Linver in receiving this award making Lenexa one of only two cities in Kansas with multiple awardees.

Thank you to Kansas City Power & Light – our sponsor of today's event – for their ongoing commitment to Lenexa.

Thanks to Commerce Bank and my associates for their support and covering for me when city commitments require time away from bank responsibilities.

Thank you to all of our committed volunteers, especially you who serve on our boards, councils, and commissions, for your role in making Lenexa a success. Your dedication to Lenexa is evident by the countless hours you give ensuring that the voices of our citizens are heard.

A special thank you goes out to Don Oppliger for his service to Lenexa. Don retired as the Chairman of the Lenexa Planning Commission last year. Don first joined the commission in 1977, and his 40 years of service to our community will be felt for generations to come.

I would like to introduce you to Chris Poss, the new Chairman of the planning

commission. Chris, has a degree in construction management from Pittsburg State, and brings a wealth of experience in construction and real estate to the position. Thank you Chris for taking on the added responsibilities

I would to recognize all city associates here today and ask you to stand. Please join me in recognizing them for their hard work and commitment to Lenexa. These dedicated professionals care deeply about our city and they continue to make Lenexa a premier community.

Thank you to the Lenexa Chamber of Commerce staff and volunteers. We are fortunate to have a thriving business community and an organization that connects us so well. We value the partnership.

A special thanks to Denise, Julie, and Kristin – the Lenexa Communications Team - for their assistance with today's presentation.

Finally, thanks to all of you here today for your ongoing support of Lenexa.

This is going to be an exciting year, and I look forward to celebrating our achievements with you.

## **State of the City Slideshow presentation**