
Lenexa State of the City Address

Please see bottom of page for full slideshow of presentation. Slideshows work in both Google Chrome and Firefox.

Today marks the 14th year I have delivered the State of the City address and I am pleased yet again to report that Lenexa remains strong both economically and as a place to live, work, and connect with family and friends. I have the privilege of sharing with you some highlights that made 2015 a successful year for Lenexa.

One of the most monumental events which occurred last year was the [groundbreaking ceremony](#) for the new Lenexa City Hall and Recreation Center at City Center. I will provide more details about this milestone in a minute, but first I want to share with you a few pieces of artwork from the event. The new city hall will serve the community for the next 50 years and we thought that it was important to include our youth, who will be served by the new facility into the future, in the groundbreaking ceremony. To enhance their experience, we asked kids to enter a drawing contest that would convey their thoughts about why they like Lenexa. As we look back on those entries, it is apparent the kids had excellent insight into the state of our city (see slideshow on right).

Mackenzie titled her work “my friendly neighborhood” and reminds us that safe, well maintained neighborhoods are good for Lenexa.

Isabel showed us that quality parks are a great place for residents to come together.

Stella Rose pointed out that maintaining facilities like City Hall is an important task.

Vivian helped us understand the merits of building high density housing in places like City Center.

Katelyn showed us that maintaining a healthy storm-water system has many benefits.

Erica drew the holiday lights at Sar-Ko Par Trails Park and reminded us that our festivals and events help foster a sense of community.

Drew likes Lenexa’s bike trails and pointed out that recreation opportunities are essential.

Alexander displayed the importance of economic development as his artwork focused on one of our newer businesses in Lenexa.

And my favorite of all, Seth showed the significance of public safety – and, that the mayor needs his own helicopter.

I would like to direct your attention to the [2015 Year in Review](#) at your table. You are the first to see this publication, which will reach all Lenexa residents later this week. It shares successes from the past year through the lens of Vision 2030 and shows how Lenexa is breaking new ground. I hope you take time to review the document and join us in celebrating an amazing year.

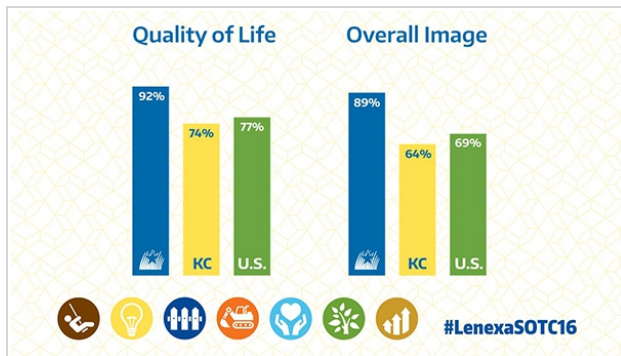
Every two years we conduct a [standardized survey of residents to gain insight into citizen satisfaction with the delivery of major city services](#) and to seek citizen input on what our priorities should be in the coming years. We are grateful to the 841 residents who showed they cared about Lenexa by completing the survey. The assessment, called the Direction Finder survey, is conducted by ETC Institute, a firm who administers similar surveys across the United States and throughout the world. When Chris Tatham, the President of ETC presented the 2015 survey results to the City Council, he indicated that our results were some of the best he had *ever* seen. In a vast majority of questions, Lenexa ranked 15 to 30 points higher than the Kansas City metropolitan and the national data. Here are just a few of the great statistics from the survey.

Three questions help us assess the overall perception residents have of Lenexa. We asked them to rate Lenexa as a place to live, as a place to raise children and, as a place to work. On the following slides, the blue bar represents Lenexa, the yellow bar represents the Kansas City metropolitan area, and the rest of the nation is shown in green. The figures represent the percentage of survey respondents who indicated their community was “excellent” or “good”. As you can see, Lenexa’s results are significantly higher than both the metropolitan and national ratings on these important questions.

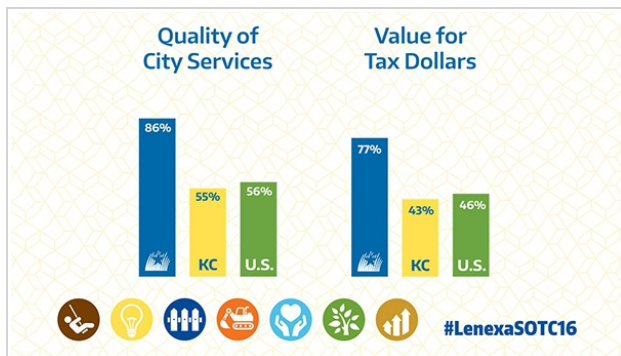




The same is true when citizens rated the overall quality of life and overall image of Lenexa. Again, you will see by these numbers that we perform significantly better than other communities.

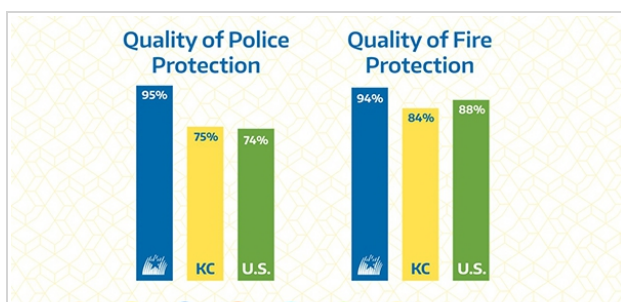


Two other ratings help us understand the perception residents have about Lenexa. The first is how people rate the overall quality of services provided by the city. Lenexa's rating is 86, which is 30 points higher than the national rating. A very important question for the governing body is the second question which asked about the value received for tax dollars. Lenexa scored a positive rating of 77 points, which is 31 points higher than the national data and most importantly, the unfavorable rating was only 6 points, which is substantially lower than the national ratings. When you look at the high ratings in each of the perception categories, it becomes apparent that our residents believe we are doing a superior job making Lenexa a great place to live.



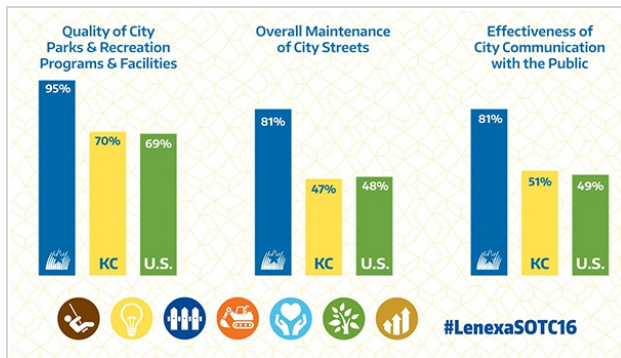
The results relating to specific city departments are equally impressive. Residents were asked to rate the overall quality of local police and fire protection. 95% of our responses assessed police protection favorably -- which is 21 points higher than the national rating. At a time in our country's history when the relationship between police departments and citizens can often be described as fragile, I am extremely proud of the strong rapport which exists in Lenexa. This positive relationship has been achieved by years of strong leadership, high quality officers, hard work, professional training, and exceptional outreach programs on the part of [Lenexa's Police Department](#).

The same is true for the quality of local fire protection where our rating of 94% is 10 points higher than the metro data and 6 points higher than the nation. Our [Fire Department](#) -- which responded to a record number of calls in 2015 -- also takes time to do extensive outreach to the public. I am pleased to let you know the Fire Department will offer a new program, the Citizens Fire Academy, for the first time later this year.





It's not just public safety that tops the charts. This slide gives you a glimpse into how other departments are rated. You see that [Parks and Recreation](#), [Municipal Services](#) and [Communications](#) all excel when compared to other communities. These are just three examples from the survey and it is easy to find dozens more like them. These ratings don't just happen – they are the result of strong and focused leadership, dedicated employees who work hard every day to provide quality services, many [volunteers](#) who provide countless hours of service to the community, and most important of all, our citizens and investors who provide the resources necessary to make Lenexa a premier community.



One final survey item that I want to call out is how well our residents think we are [planning growth](#). Not only does our rating of 77 points exceed other communities by 34 points, I am pleased to report that it saw an 8 point jump over the 2013 data. I believe our citizens understand that the remarkable growth happening in Lenexa is the result of years of careful planning. Special thanks go to our [Community Development](#) staff, led by Beccy Yocham, the [Chamber of Commerce](#), the [Lenexa EDC](#) and the Planning Commission who helped us achieve these results.



I would encourage you to take the time to review the [complete survey](#) results on the city's website.

One of the most exciting things about the past year is the progress we made on the [Civic Center project](#) which will bring a new city hall, recreation center, and public market to City Center. Early last year, the governing body selected JE Dunn Construction as our general contractor for the Civic Center project. We are working closely with Dunn, PGAV Architects, and CBC Real Estate to deliver a first rate project to the community with a projected opening date of summer of 2017.

In June, hundreds gathered for the [groundbreaking ceremony](#). Thirteen Lenexa children, whose art we previously recognized, joined the Governing Body, project partners, and city staff for the groundbreaking.

The ceremony was followed by a [Food Truck Frenzy](#) where more than 6,000 people enjoyed a community celebration. It was a fantastic way to usher in the Lenexa Civic Center project.

Since the groundbreaking, a great deal of work has taken place on the construction site. The following slides show some of the progress to date.

This slide details the overall construction site identifying the location of the new city hall, the public market contained within city hall, the recreation center, the outdoor gathering spaces and the parking garage.





City Hall is located on the northeastern corner of the site. The four-story, 70,000-square-foot building will include city hall offices, an art gallery, and a 250-seat community forum, which will host planning commission and city council meetings, and will be available for community use for civic and small group performances.

The Public Market will be leased to entrepreneurs and culinary artisans. You can see by this rendering it will be an invigorating addition to City Center.

In the construction photo, this elevator shaft is located in the public market area. We are beginning to meet with local entrepreneurs about the public market and encourage you to spread the word among your contacts.

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

The indoor aquatic center, which features 14,000 square feet of fun, includes a zero-depth entry pool, an interactive water play structure, lap lanes, a lazy river, a deep water well, and a wellness pool. This photo is the deep water well which will feature a diving platform and climbing wall. This much-needed addition to our community is sure to become one of the most popular destinations at City Center.

The Civic Center is only one of many exciting things happening in Lenexa City Center. As you can see on the map, our project is at the heart of City Center. In December we signed a memorandum of understanding with two important partners which will bring other new facilities to City Center.

The Johnson County Library will build a new 40,000-square-foot facility next to City Hall and relocate the Lackman Branch collection to City Center.

The Shawnee Mission School District will build a state-of-the-art competitive aquatic facility in the center block of 87th Street west of the Recreation Center. The first of its kind in the metro area, the facility is expected to open by 2018. Together, the library and aquatics center will bring thousands of people to City Center every year and will help fulfill our desire to create a vibrant gathering place for our residents and visitors.

The Domain at City Center, developed by EPC and located adjacent to the Civic Center project, will open in March and features 200 luxury apartments.

Across Penrose to the east, EPC in partnership with Copaken Brooks, have received approval for plans for a new mixed-use development known as The District. This plan, includes 171 residential units, 44,000 square feet of office and 36,000 square feet of retail space, and begins the formation of City Center Drive.

Penrose Place is a mixed-use project under construction north of 87th Street Parkway at Elm Ridge. The first phase features a Spring Hill Suites by Marriott, 5,000 square feet of retail space, a parking deck, and future residential uses.

To the north and west of Penrose place, adjacent to Central Green, construction will begin soon on the City Center North townhomes.

East of Central Green Park, at the northwest corner of 87th and Renner, the City has approved preliminary plans for a 27-acre mixed-use project developed by Kaizen of Dallas, featuring a three-story physician-owned hospital. Retail and office space as well as various residential options are included in the approved plan.

On the East side of Renner, north of the Water Crest Apartments, construction continues on 276 new apartments at Edge Water, the second phase of the Block Real Estate Services development.

At City Center East, the Hyatt Place Hotel and Lenexa Conference Center is nearly complete and we look forward to celebrating at their grand opening in April.

In addition, the City Council recently approved the final plans for a new sit-down restaurant that will feature American food with a Latin flair. As you can see, Lenexa City Center, established by our citizens during the [Vision 2020](#) community visioning process, is coming together. Although we have encountered a few setbacks along the way, we are excited about our current momentum and development partners, and are extremely thankful to our citizens for their patience in allowing us to take the long-term view necessary to create a special place.

As exciting as the developments happening in City Center are, I am pleased to report that business is booming throughout Lenexa. The total building permit valuation in 2015 reached \$299 million -- the highest volume ever. This milestone marks the third consecutive year that construction valuation has exceeded \$200 million -- also a first in our history.

It is obvious that our community remains a place where people want to live. During 2015, Lenexa saw the highest level of single-family home development since 2006 with 241 permits issued. These permits accounted for \$77 million in construction value with an average permit value of \$325,000. When you look at the number of single-family homes, quality multifamily housing, and senior living facilities being constructed around town, you see that Lenexa continues to create a great mix of housing choices for our residents.

It was also a strong year for commercial building activity. The Lenexa Logistics Center at College & Renner continued to develop -- and in 2015 plans emerged for Lenexa Logistics North, which promises to add over a million square feet of warehouse and distribution space north of College and west of Renner.

Flowers Baking Company began production last summer at the former Hostess Brands Bakery site. It is great to smell fresh bread coming from this area once again. New businesses in Lenexa in 2015 included Plexpod, Composite One, Macro Industries, P1 Group, FridgeWise, and SizeWise.

While we are happy to welcome new investors to the city, we are especially pleased when an existing company elects to expand in place. In 2015, CEVA Biomune, Sparhawk Laboratories, Deluxe Check, Gill Studios, Axcella Care, and Kocher Beck expanded their workforce and/or made major investments in their existing Lenexa campuses.

In March of 2015, upon receipt of a [Mid-America Regional Council](#) grant, staff launched a [planning project to study Old Town](#) to help determine the right mix of land uses for the area. We remain committed to this important part of Lenexa and look forward to working with our partners as we shape the future of this historic area. If you would like to learn more, I encourage you to visit our website or attend the [next public meeting](#) on April 26, at the Senior Center.

Reaching the milestone population of 50,000 afforded us the opportunity to receive [Community Development Block grant funds](#) directly from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development -- rather than receiving our funding via the county application. As a direct benefit city, we anticipate additional federal funds, which will be used to benefit low to moderate income neighborhoods in Lenexa. We are pursuing citizen input on priorities as we create a strategic plan for these funds and encourage you to attend the [next meeting](#) on February 25, at the Community Center or visit the website to learn more.

The Kansas Department of Transportation completed an immense amount of work on Phase 2 of the [Johnson County Gateway project](#) in 2015.

Beginning February 21, weather permitting, [95th Street will be closed over I-35 for a 6-month period to construct a Diverging Diamond interchange](#). As part of the project, Lenexa Drive and Marshall Drive will be constructed under 95th Street, creating through streets and correcting years of confusion in this visitor laden area. The project will address traffic flow at 95th Street and the I-35 interchange. We certainly understand that a complete closure is inconvenient, but we truly believe the long-term benefit will be worth the short-term challenges. Businesses in the area will remain open during construction and I want to encourage each of you to continue to support the businesses during this difficult time.

In another significant project, land was cleared in preparation to build Ridgeview Road from K-10 north to Prairie Star Parkway. This project will open another area of our community for development, provide a direct access route for Meritex to the highway, and provide new opportunities for regional retail, office, and business park development. In addition to economic development, a number of other great things happened in 2015.

Lenexa employees received several awards for their outstanding work. Our staff was recognized as a winner of the Excellence in Snow and Ice Control Award from the American Public Works Association thanks to the hard work from [Municipal Services and Parks](#).

Our [Communications](#) team was recognized at their national conference by bringing home two first place awards receiving Best in the nation honors for the best overall Annual Report and the best Graphics in the Annual Report. I might note, this is the second year in a row that the Lenexa Communications staff brought home top honors for the Year in Review publication. In addition, the team received a second place honor for the Best use of Facebook, and third place for the employee newsletter.

The [Police Department](#) was presented with the Community Prestige Award from the Johnson County NAACP for their active community policing programs. Police Major Dawn Layman was named the 2015 Woman Law Enforcement Executive of the Year by the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives.

We also added some new faces to city leadership. With the retirement of fire chief Dan Rhodus, we conducted an extensive search and found the best candidate for the job was a 28-year veteran of the [Lenexa Fire Department](#), Lonny Owens. Chief Owens is doing an outstanding job leading the department. In January of this year, Jim Bowers joined the city as our [Human Resources](#) Director. Jim brings over 30 years of municipal and college HR experience to his new position with the city. Please join me in congratulating Lonny and Jim in their new positions.

The city continues to provide new and innovative programs for our community. Parks and Recreation expanded their offerings with an emphasis on programs for families. Big hits included the [Race across Lenexa](#) and the [Tiny Tots Triathlon](#). Our [festivals](#) continue to grow in popularity and we had record attendance at many of our events. We expanded Scouting Park in Old Town and improved the Freedom Fields ball fields. Restrooms were either replaced or added at several of our parks. We reinvested in aging trails and built new trails to better serve our residents.

Our [commitment to the arts](#) continued with the installation of “Frenzied Flight” -- located at Central Green, which was dedicated during the 2015 Lenexa Art Fair. Later this spring, yet another addition to the public collection will be added near 87th and Greenwood. The piece, entitled “Amusing Breeze”, will have bright colored pieces welded together to create a seamless structure that supports kinetic elements.

Last spring, hundreds of residents enjoyed a variety of music styles during our inaugural season of the [Lenexa Outdoor Concert Series](#). Please check the website for the 2016 concert performers, dates and locations.

The [I Like Lenexa mobile app](#) launched last May connecting residents to parks, pools, events and landmarks. In addition to having current information in the palm of their hand, the app encourages users to earn points by checking in and completing fun tasks which can be traded in for Lenexa prizes. More than 1,800 people have downloaded the free app. This project was completed in-house by city staff with no external costs.

Lenexa is known for its innovative programs and commitment to sustainability and the environment. We were the first city in the metropolitan area to implement curbside recycling and in 2015 we expanded our program making Lenexa the first city in Johnson County to require apartment complexes to provide recycling for their residents. In our continued efforts to reduce the use of paper and implement the latest time saving technologies, we converted our residential building permit submission process and our police and court ticketing process to electronic systems.

As per our survey, [street maintenance](#) remains a top priority for residents and we dedicated additional resources to street improvements in 2015. The city hired Stantec to employ a laser road imaging system to collect more accurate data on existing pavement conditions throughout the city. This information will be used to better prioritize future street improvements. Municipal Services also experimented with a new maintenance technique, called [Ultra-thin Bonded Asphalt Surfacing](#), which costs half as much as previous methods and is faster to apply, causes less disruption to residents, and lasts twice as long as other treatments.

The city's financial outlook remains strong as Lenexa maintained AAA bond ratings from both Moody's and Standard & Poor's for 2015 issues. Our [Finance](#) staff deserve special recognition as they did an exceptional job on preparation for the annual city audit. We take our fiduciary responsibility seriously and strive to make sure that the tax dollars we are entrusted with are used wisely. I'd like to recognize Doug Robinson for his expertise in financial management and for his supervision of the Human Resources department pending Jim's arrival.

Finally, I would like to recognize and thank our [Legal Department](#) and [City Administration](#) for their hard work. Just about everything I've shared with you today is touched in some way by these departments and their work product is second to none.

In closing, I would like to thank the Lenexa Chamber for hosting the annual state of the city address, Kansas City Power & Light for their continued sponsorship of the luncheon, and all of you for attending. It's my privilege to speak with you on behalf of the City Council and share the good news.