

Glendale Mayor gives State of the City address

Cecilia Chan
Independent Newsmedia

Mayor Jerry Weiers gave his annual State of the City address March 2 at the Renaissance Glendale Hotel & Spa in the Westgate Entertainment District. Glendale Chamber of Commerce hosted the event. Below is the mayor's speech.

"I want to thank the Glendale Chamber of Commerce, its Board of Directors, and nearly 1,200 businesses and their members for hosting the 66th Annual State of the City Address in partnership with the city of Glendale.

It is my great honor to serve as your mayor of Glendale, and I'm especially humbled to have been entrusted with this privilege for another four years.

I want to take a moment to thank a couple of people who are here with me tonight who have had a major impact in my life.

My mother Myrtle is here tonight. And my wife Sandy of nearly 35 years.



Mayor Jerry Weiers gave his State of the City Address March 2.

Also at my table I would like to introduce Chief Jacob Campbell and Col. Robert Sylvester from Luke Air Force Base. Tom Sadler, president and CEO of the Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority, and Andy Gorchov, general manager of University of Phoenix Stadium operated by SMG. Also at my table are Pastor Dean Keest (Kuest) of Central Christian Church, Buzz Sands and the president of our Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission Rachel Oberlander.

As I was thinking of what I wanted to focus on in my speech tonight, I kept coming back to a practice that I have made a cornerstone in my life.

Every night before I go to sleep, I ask myself this very simple question – did I make a positive difference in someone's life today? I'd like to say that each and every night the answer to that question is "yes."

But, it isn't. Too many times I'm not able to make a positive difference in someone's life. But I'm going to keep trying each and every day. Yet, every morning, I wake up and I ask myself – Can I make that positive difference in someone's life today?

As public servants, that's our job. So, how do we do that?

Making a positive difference is pretty broad. It can be as simple as buying a cup of coffee for the person behind you at the convenience store. It can be as complex as taking controversial, but necessary, steps to improve the creditworthiness of our municipal bonds, which results in our city's bond rating increasing.

Making a positive difference comes in all forms.

There are really five areas of focus that I want to talk about tonight where we can not only make a positive difference, but we can keep this incredible forward-momentum going that the city of Glendale is experiencing. The most important area where we must maintain diligence is continuing to improve on our city's financial performance.

Last year, Glendale's bond rating was upgraded to an A-plus rating by Standard & Poor's. That's something I'm still extremely proud of because it's a strong indicator that our city is headed in the right direction.

We passed a \$693 million balanced budget without raising taxes. We're just over \$35 million and closing in on the targeted goal of a \$50 million "savings account"

by the end of fiscal year 2019.

We are in the first year of a five-year plan to repair our city's roads—something long overdue. And we were able to provide a modest budget increase for public safety.

We hired AEG Facilities, which is the one of the world's leading sports and entertainment venue managers, to manage our arena. And I want to thank several of our West Valley mayors who continue to support our city's efforts to keep the Arizona Coyotes in Glendale as a vital economic driver.

And, recently, we negotiated a financial settlement agreement with the Arizona Cardinals and the Arizona Sports & Tourism Authority so that we could create a positive path forward for all.

I want to thank our City Council, our City Manager Kevin Phelps and all of our staff directors and leaders in the city. Glendale now has taken the necessary steps to make a "huge" difference in the lives of its citizens and business community.

There are few things that can make a positive difference in someone's life more than finding a job.

Before going into public service more than 12 years ago, I owned and operated several businesses. I owned a trailer business, a chain of steak houses, a wholesale and retail produce business. I even owned an aviation business, flying my own plane and pulling advertising banners.

For all of you who own a business or manage a business, I want to tell you – I get it! I understand first hand what it's like for businesses because I have walked miles in your shoes. I know what it's like to not cash your own paycheck, sticking it in the back of the drawer, just to make sure your employees could cash theirs.

But at the same time, it's so gratifying to run your own business, to watch it grow, and to provide jobs for people. And the last thing business people need is government making things more difficult! It's hard enough, without government getting in the way.

Along those lines, I'm very proud that in Glendale we have built a strong reputation as a business-friendly city. I will continue to hold fast to our commitment to attract new businesses and help our current businesses expand.

The key to that success is speed-to-market. So, what exactly is "speed to market?" What does that look like in real terms? In its simplest form, it comes down to communication with our customers. Do not put off 'till tomorrow—what we can do today.

For every day that a business is delayed, that is a day that costs them money both in lost revenues and interest costs. I know that this places additional pressure on various city departments to perform— I get it. That does not mean that we will lower standards of quality or safety.

But it does mean that we will continue to elevate our communication – we will continue to react in a manner that encourages business, rather than deters it.

And we will continue to operate our city in a culture that is helpful to business, that cares about business and that demonstrates through action that we take the needs of business partners seriously.

In 2016, new and expanding companies opened. It created 1,400 new jobs in Glendale. That's huge!

As I mentioned earlier, providing an opportunity for someone with a new job is probably the best, most satisfying way to make a positive difference in someone's life.

The city of Glendale currently has about 2.8 million square feet of building projects in the pipeline. About 1.8 million square feet are under construction right now.

The biggest, by far, is Conair, just north of our municipal airport in Glendale, less than a mile from here. Conair's efforts to add more than 800,000 square feet will make it the second-largest corporate campus in the Valley. They will add 300 jobs, bringing Conair's Glendale employment to 750.

And, speaking of expansion projects, I'm very excited to make an announcement tonight regarding two projects just finalized, literally in the last few days.

Alaska USA Federal Credit Union has purchased the 185,000-square-foot Talavi Tech Building near 55th and Bell.

And the Arizona Kidney Disease and Hypertension Centers, who already have two existing Glendale locations, now have acquired the 40,000-square-foot office building at Maryland and 91st Avenue. They will offer the only children's kidney group in the state of Arizona, and with this expansion they will have invested \$25 million in Glendale.

Additional expansion projects in Glendale include Midwestern University. Their

enrollment has now grown to 3,500 students.

Aspera at 75th Avenue and the Loop 101 has continued to add retail and also added upscale apartments in 2016.

There are several new projects in and around Westgate, including the Westgate Healthcare Campus, Credit Union West, and Home-2-Suites Hotel.

The Westgate Healthcare Campus that broke ground in 2016 is going to bring about 1,500 medical jobs alone, and I was so happy to see them turning shovels last year.

The medical industry continues to grow in Glendale.

These are high-paying jobs that really are a foundation for our economic development success. Companies like Humana, Redina, and Harvard Drug Group are all expanding in Glendale.

From a medical industry standpoint, our city is a model and the envy of other Arizona cities. This is truly something I'm very proud of, not only for the jobs the industry brings, but perhaps more importantly our citizens have the highest quality of healthcare available to them.

We have some "new-locates" to Glendale, as well. H & M Metal Processing out of Akron, Ohio will be developing their Glendale facility.

Santé will employ 125 people in a new senior living project at Zanjero. And other new companies include Iron Factory, and Davis Research and Ring, which is a customer service center at Westgate.

And speaking of Westgate. Our Sports & Entertainment District in Glendale is extremely excited to be hosting the 2017 NCAA Men's Final Four on April 1 and 3, which is a Saturday and Monday. But it's really a four-day event.

I think my favorite day might be Friday, March 31 because that's the free- to-the-public day!

I do want to thank our partners, the NCAA Host Committee and the Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority for all of your work on this incredible event, and the partnerships that it takes to pull off a mega event like this that puts Glendale on a worldwide stage. It's going to be an exciting weekend, no doubt!

We are going to continue to see major development in the western part of Glendale and along the Loop 303 corridor.

The EPCOR project, a multi-agency partnership that broke ground just over a year ago, will provide wastewater and recycled water services to thousands of homes and businesses in the coming years, allowing Glendale to continue our growth.

According to the Maricopa Association of Governments, the growth projections over the next 35 years show that the West Valley will grow at almost double the rate of the East Valley and city of Phoenix.

The numbers don't lie.

Glendale is where the economic growth is happening. Glendale undoubtedly provides significant advantages over our friends in the East Valley.

Our availability of affordable land, our qualified and abundant workforce and our absolute commitment to speed-to-market: All of these factors will ensure that Glendale remains the choice for business not only in the Valley but in the entire state of Arizona.

The numbers and figures I mentioned earlier are impressive. But, it's also critical that we remember the small-businessperson.

You might have noticed that on your table is a single individually-wrapped pickle. What you may not have known is that Mrs. Klein's Pickle Co. is an Arizona staple that has been around for more than 60 years.

They are a Glendale Chamber member and they donated one of their products for you tonight to help me make the point that small business is the backbone of our city, and of our nation.

I think you'll agree with me that it's kind of a "big dill."

It's for that reason that every week I select a business in Glendale, name them the Mayor's Business of the Week, and present them with a certificate of appreciation. The vast majority of those I've chosen have been small businesses, churnin' and burnin' with just a handful of employees.

We produce and send out a video of the Mayor's Business of the Week on my weekly E-news as well as my social media channels "at-MayorWeiers." The Chamber pushes it out on their social media channels, too, and the business is also featured in the Glendale Star's printed and online editions. It's just a simple way to say thank you for doing business in Glendale, for contributing to our economy and

our community.

Small businesses create about two-thirds of the new jobs in the U.S. each year. Again, when you provide someone a job, it's perhaps the best way that you can make a positive difference in someone's life.

On your table, you have a copy of an abbreviated version of our city's 2016 Accomplishments, assembled by our Public Affairs team. It mentions our Economic Development highlights, as well as many other great points of pride for our city. I'd like you to go ahead and pick that up.

On the cover, you'll note it really is a big deal. And another reason you should take a look is that one of those programs has a sticker on the back –and that person has just won a special Final Four basket courtesy of our Final Four Host Committee!

Well, we've talked about fiscal responsibility and job creation, and now I want to take a moment to discuss public safety.

I know I speak for our entire Council when I say that we look forward to working with our new Chief of Police Rick St. John. Through Rick's leadership, we will continue to build on Glendale's strong foundation of law enforcement.

Our Police Department responded to more than 183,000 calls last year. They are out there on the front lines protecting and serving each and every day. You know, our police departments are under the microscope right now all across the nation.

And I have to say that nothing upsets me faster than when someone disparages the hard-working members of our law enforcement community. I just can't and I won't tolerate it, because I know how dedicated they are to not only to enforcing the law, but to preventing crime from happening in the first place.

We did see a 7 percent drop in theft, burglary and arson crimes in Glendale, which is certainly good news.

I'm proud to report that our Police Department is now equipped with body-cameras. That is definitely going to assist our officers in a number of ways. It also comes with a great deal of additional administrative work.

Each time that video is called into use, significant redactions have to take place. Not just people's faces, but things in the background you might not think of, like photos on the walls of minor children, things like that.

It's a significant undertaking. But, we're very excited to have this as another safety advancement not only for our police officers but for our residents and businesses as well.

And I want to add that policing partnerships are a two-way street. It's important for our officers and the leadership within the department to know our business community. And I know that Chief St. John is a proponent of our officers at all levels forming better relationships with our business community and its citizens.

We've got programs like Coffee with a Cop, Community Events and our Citizen's Academy. That's really the only way this is going to work, folks. We have to work together.

We have more than 400 sworn officers, and another 150 police professional civilians working for our department and they do an incredible job protecting and serving a city of a quarter-million people, one of the 100-largest cities in the nation.

But they can't do it alone. It is our collective jobs to keep everyone safe.

If you want to make a positive difference in someone's life, bring a friend to Coffee With A Cop. And you know an officer will drop by and visit with our local businesses when they have the time. Just stopping by and introducing themselves can make an enormously positive impact.

That is how we build a community and that is how we make a positive, safe difference in someone's life.

I want to also point out that there are plenty of opportunities to engage with our Fire Department, which held 543 public education events and classes last year. We had about 18,000 people attend these events, which is impressive. One of many programs they offer on environmental safety is "what to do in case of a bee attack."

Some of you may remember that after I was swarmed by bees last year and stung more than 20 times. One of those tips came in real handy, run! Now run faster! And isn't it fitting that incredible fire crew that responded to my call was on the "B" shift!

In all seriousness, our Fire Department responded to more than 41,500 incidents and we had the highest number of fire/EMS calls per unit in the whole Valley.

We were able to enhance the safety of our firefighters by purchasing a second set of "turn-outs" for every member to help eliminate cancer-causing elements from entering their skin after a fire. We also are ensuring service to our customers by investing in the training of more paramedics and purchasing new EMS equipment.

I know there are thousands of people quite happy to see them show up and they definitely have a way of making a positive difference in someone's life each day, especially when they are saving someone's life.

Another way we make a positive difference in people's lives is by providing them with a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

Whether it's providing Movies by Moonlight at our various recreational facilities, a Silver-Sneaker program at our Adult Center, or a ROOTS program at the O'Neil Center, it's critical that we continue to improve the quality of life for our residents.

And, from a quality-of-life standpoint, it's encouraging to see the housing market starting to turn around. The City Council approved StoneHaven, which is the first master planned community built in the Valley since the great recession.

That project will bring more than 1,100 new homes to Glendale just Southeast of Westgate at 91st and Bethany Home Road. One exciting component of this is that Bethany Home Road between 83rd and 91st Avenues will finally be finished.

Another aspect of our quality of life in Glendale is special events. For those of you who know me, you know that I happen to really enjoy special events and I've seen those events make a positive difference in people's lives.

Throughout my time in public service, I have spearheaded many special events to raise money for causes near and dear to my heart. From the Hometown Christmas Parade, now in its fifth year and one of the largest parades in Arizona to the Mayor's Big Dog Run motorcycle ride for veterans scholarships to the Shriners, the list of special events for special causes goes on and on.

The city of Glendale has become widely recognized in the Valley, in Arizona and even the country for producing signature events, from Glendale Glitters, to our annual Chocolate Affaire Festival, there are 12 signature events produced by the city.

Thousands flock to our downtown, to Westgate and other places in the city to experience Glendale festivals. We do realize that in order for these events to thrive, remain fresh and best serve our citizens and visitors, we need to continue to evaluate how and why we are doing business.

And we do plan to make improvements wherever and whenever necessary. An important part of that is gathering feedback.

We opened up a citywide survey of our special events, and we do plan to use that feedback, among other strategies, to help craft an experience that is second to none, whether you're a visitor, a vendor or a sponsor.

And speaking of business sponsors, another project that I am very proud of in my four-plus years serving as your mayor is the new Archery Range at Heroes Regional Park. In October, we opened 16 lanes for archery and held a huge grand opening complete with Olympic athletes, filling the whole range with kids. It really was a very special day.

One of the reasons it was so meaningful to me is that the project was primarily funded by grants and in-kind donations. I was proud to call on friends like Arizona Rock Products Association and Heritage Trucking and many others, to ask them to make a positive difference, which they did – big time.

One thing I've learned in my life is if you don't ask, you already know the answer. The list of contributors is up on the screen. Please join me in recognizing those businesses that answered the call and made the Heroes Regional Park Archery Range possible.

We've talked about four of the five areas of focus—fiscal responsibility, economic development, public safety and quality of life.

The fifth area of emphasis is an important group of people who also answered the call — our veterans.

I'm so proud to announce that I'll be traveling to Washington D.C. this summer to receive, on behalf of Glendale and our West Valley partners, the Defense Community of the Year Award from Association of Defense Cities.

This is largely because of the strong commitment we have as a city and the West Valley to support Luke Air Force Base as a training site for the F-35 and more than 5,000 Airmen and their families stationed here.

In 2017 I'm looking forward to hosting my fifth annual Stand-Up for Veterans event at Glendale Community College. This event attracted more than 350 veterans and their families.

Thanks in great part to our City Courts involvement, our Glendale Community Services Department and a multitude of sponsors, Stand-Up resulted in many veterans walking away from the event gainfully employed.

We now have an Arizona Veterans Services representative who comes to our Community Action Program, CAP-office, twice per month and meets with veterans who are in need of some assistance. I hope to make that a full-time office.

And now, with the help of the Chamber's Military & Veteran Affairs Committee, I'm pleased to announce that we will be hosting an event to honor new recruits who've committed to join all branches of the military.

I decided to start this event after a story I heard recently really got to me. Two fathers were talking about their sons' futures. One was bragging about his son going to Stanford or some somewhere like that. Then he asked the other father, "where's your son going?"

When the other dad said his son was going into the Army, the guy listening said, "oh, that's too bad." I thought, that's not right.

It really made me mad, in fact.

Because the military itself is an incredible educational opportunity, preparing our youth for a successful life.

Not everyone is destined for college. For those that are, that's fantastic.

We do have an incredible educational system here in Glendale, from our elementary system, to our high schools and up. Students can choose from GCC to ASU's Thunderbird School of Global Management, to Midwestern University and an amazing network of technical schools, just to name a few.

We certainly offer an educated work force for businesses locating to Glendale. We have all of that.

But for those young men and women that choose to serve our country, they should also be celebrated for their decision.

This spring, on April 28, we'll hold a ceremony to honor those young people who have made a life-changing decision to enter our Armed Forces. Service to our city, our state, and our country is, indeed, a noble and honorable way to make a positive difference in someone's life.

And while we are on that topic of community service, I want to recognize the high school students who are here tonight serving on the Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission.

We have about 40 students this year signed up and that's more than we've had in a long, long time. They are committed to public service and they are learning civic engagement, representing high schools all across Glendale.

Each year, they are challenged to raise some funds to help them with their service projects and their annual banquet. And each year, Joe Cerreta has helped us out by producing a very special box of chocolates called "Mayor Weiers' Road Apples."

Boxes are \$20 dollars per each, and I know they were selling them earlier. How many do we have left? OK, we have 16 left and the only way to get me off the stage tonight is for all of you all to crack open your wallets, find a \$20 bill, waive it in the air, and our MYAC students will canvass the room to finish-off their 100-box goal.

While we are finishing that project off, I want to continue with tonight's theme, by recognizing someone who has definitely made a positive difference.

Each year I give a Citizen of the Year Award to someone who I feel truly embraces what it means to serve. This year, I'm proud to announce this year's recipient, and ask him to come to join me on stage, Buzz Sands, owner of Sands Chevrolet.

In closing, I simply want to say that I am honored to serve as your mayor. I try each and every day to make that positive difference.

Last year, my team calculated that I attended some 781 meetings, including public appearances and city business.

You have my word I'll continue to work hard for you— in partnership with our team here at the city, with our local businesses and our regional partners to move Glendale forward.

But it's a two-way street. We need business leaders to get involved, to join committees, to join city commissions, sponsor and support community events and programs.

I encourage you – get involved and active in our city. Enjoy our beautiful trails system, take in a spring training game at Camelback Ranch, visit our libraries, take a water conservation class, volunteer at Hope-for-Hunger Food Bank or through our Neighborhood Services, join a nonprofit board, or try the Citizens Police Academy.

There are so many ways to get actively involved, you just never know who you might meet along the way and have an opportunity to make that positive difference

in their life.

Thank you all for coming this evening. And most of all, go out and make a positive difference in someone's life. Thank you and God Bless you."

Glendale PoliceState of the City