

## **Introduction**

Good morning, everyone. Let me begin by saying thank you for coming to this state of the city address. My good friend Irv, has introduced our visiting elected officials and VIPS, so in the interest of time, let me simply say once again to all of you –welcome.

Today I would like to talk to you about two things. The first is a short review of the past year of the city and the second is a vision for our future. But before we begin I would ask you to watch this short video about our city. I think it will serve as a tone setter for what I would like to share with you.

## **VIDEO – 5 minutes**

### **Review of the Past Year**

#### *City Leadership*

I hope you enjoyed the video as I did. It was put together by Teresa Collins, Jorge Martinez and their staff. Before I begin, I would like to introduce to you the city leadership, that with their teams, makes it all happen. So when I call your name, please rise and remain standing. I'm hoping you will get a round of applause at the end.

Our City Manager-Jeff Epp, our City Attorney-Mike McGuiness, our Assistant City Manager-Jay Petrek, our dep city Managers-Bill Wolfe and Sheryl Bennett. Our Department Heads: Engineering-Julie Procopio, Public Works-Joe Goulart, Community Development-Bill Martin, Utilities- Chris McKinney, Communications and Community Services-Joanna Axelrod, Information Systems-Rob Van De Hey, City Clerk- Zach Beck, and finally our Fire Chief- Rick Vogt and our Police Chief-Craig Carter.

Now some of you may wonder what they do and the wrong answer is nothing. They work tirelessly to execute the will of the council and improve our city. They are the public servants whose job it is to get to "yes" and they come to work every day with that goal in mind. So please join me in a round of applause for our city staff.

#### *Clean and Repair*

Now I would like to share with you some of their accomplishments this past year. Our crews cleaned up 27,408 graffiti tags last year with the average response time being hours from the time of reporting. They picked up 5,100 shopping carts. They filled potholes and re-paved 94 miles' worth of new lanes and replaced more than a linear mile of sidewalk. They added and replaced another 5.6 miles of bike lanes.

#### *Public Safety*

They kept our City safe. Last year Escondido PD arrested 5,108 bad guys, and more than 3600 of those physically ended up in jail. Our combined police and fire dispatch handled more than 49,000 citizen calls. (that's about 134 calls a day if you're doing the math). Our firefighters put out 203 fires last year. Our paramedics and ambulances took 11,239 people to the hospital. And they also helped 186 mobile home residents get smoke alarms in their homes.

#### *Projects*

Our staff handled big projects, like widening East Velley Parkway going up the grade, within budget and on schedule. They restored Grape Day Park and kept it clean and safe.

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### *Water*

They also produced 3,316 acre feet of recycled water. As one of the few cities that has a local water supply, we also produced nearly 800 feet of local water through Lake Wohlford and Lake Dixon. And let me tell you, we'll have a lot more this year!

### *Innovation*

Our team is efficient as well. The staff rolled out a brand new and very successful online utility billing system last year, and I'm proud to announce that we're within weeks of online business license renewal and payment. We will have other online services for building, planning, and engineering later this year. We've moved ahead aggressively with carriers to implement 5G for our citizens, synchronized the Bear Valley Parkway corridor signal system, with the El Norte Parkway being next. The 1,327 solar permits we issued last year (2018) were the most in the city's history – and we're on pace to issue even more this year.

### *Volunteers*

Here's another number that I find impressive: in 2018, in our City, over 200 volunteers contributed 26,000 hours of service to the Escondido Public Library. We have community members volunteer at city hall, at the police department, and at our parks.

### **Vision**

Now I would like to transition to a discussion about our future. I believe that good business growth is the economic engine and key element to a city's health. But in order to attract, sustain and grow good business we need all those other elements that make a city desirable to be good as well, like public safety, education, quality of life, and smart development to name a few. You can't fix or improve one element and expect results, it must be a holistic approach.

Now a number of years back I heard a story about a man who was lost in the woods. Eventually he encountered another man walking in the woods and after he told him he was lost, the man asked him, who are you and where are you going. The lost man thought they were such good questions he asked them to himself every day of his life since. So, who are we and where are we going.

Today, I would like to share with you an amalgamation of hundreds of conversations that I've had with our city residents that I believe reveal and define who we really are. And offer you a vision for the future.

### *Agricultural Roots*

We are a city that is based in the values of agriculture and that is who we are. Now I know some of you might be thinking - but I want us to be a city of affluence, imported luxury cars and sophisticated tastes, after all we live in cool and hip southern California, we are not some caricature of the Grant Wood's painting "American Gothic." Well - I would argue that agriculture made us a city of faith and values and because of that we are in fact richer than our neighbors. Agriculture doesn't produce headlines that say, Farmer indicted for ...fill in the blank. Agriculture creates community, it makes you talk to your neighbor. It makes us an extended family with different opinions where members remain family at the end of the day. It makes us compassionate, helping our neighbor get back on their feet without creating a culture of dependency. It makes us good stewards of the land and by extension environmentalists, fiscally prudent,

and hard workers. It makes us grateful and enlightened. We do not live in fear, because we have each other's back. We are not a soulless bedroom community but rather a city that runs deep. It gives us character that we want to pass on to our children and makes us a place that people want to live in.

Those values also gave us foresight and belief in the future and ourselves, all you have to do is look around and see our parks, our Center for the Arts, Daley ranch, the quality of life we offer, the innovation and accomplishments of our schools, the history we cherish, even our location as a gateway to agriculture and the backcountry. Couple that to the richness of our diversity, and we have more to offer than any of the coastal cities or even our neighbors. But somehow, there are those that think we are something less. I guess if you call something ugly or undesirable all the time, after a while you might start to believe it. But this city is far from undesirable, and if you bought into that narrative you need to stop. We are fortunate to live in this beautiful city with its rich history and culture.

### *Future*

Agriculture also offers us the opportunity to create a prosperous and affluent future. And not just financial, but through the application of its community values help us solve the challenges every city faces. **Imagine with me.** I'll start by sharing with you some initiatives of a few people I met. If I told you all of them, we would be here all day. I met Deanna Smith who owns Deanna's gluten free bakery on south Escondido. Deanna started the business simply to help her niece who had Celiac. She now ships her products all over the country. She wants to start a garden for elementary school children as sort of a summer school to help them learn patience and nurturing. Now take that idea and expand it to comments from Agner Medrano from Victory Outreach church who among other challenges deals with gang members. He said that one of the key deterrents to gang membership is activity and purpose for youth. We have food insecurity here in North county, so imagine with me youth at a crossroad in their lives choosing to work to help feed those in need. Think of the purpose and self-worth that would give them. Greg Anglea from Interfaith is working on a social enterprise concept that takes those who have fallen and gives them the last step they need in the recovery cycle. After they are back on their feet and clean, he will give them work in a food pantry concept which allows them to come back to society healed and productive. Phil Henry is looking to put us on the map as an Avocado center. Alex MacLachlan who puts on the Tamale festival wants to start a music festival. Dr Joi Blake from Palomar college wants to start vertical farming at the Escondido campus. We are also going to talk to UCSD about their interest in going into agriculture. And this is important - remember the incubator for the bio tech industry was the R&D at UCSD. And our city's economic development plan has Ag Tech as one of its goals. And speaking of technology, do you know Escondido Disposal saves from the landfill over 125,000 tons of recycled waste every year, uses renewable gas for its vehicles and has in work a cutting edge technology plant to recycle our food waste to create renewable gas. By the way Palomar Community College also stepped up to help us provide library services to the residents in the East Valley area. That's partnership.

I think you can see with me that these community-based initiatives are what makes our city great, our community strong and our future bright. And there are many more - there are folks working on a new library and community center, an aquatic center, a permanent indoor farmer's market to name a few more. And the city staff have been partners all along, as these efforts move forward, they are in step with the community. For example, we already have a 100-year water plan that accounts for our growth in population and agricultural needs and will transition us to potable recycled water.

All of these efforts are affirmations of our commitment to each other, and our belief in the future.

### *Methodology*

Now if you are like me and see that we have what it takes and are poised to take great steps forward, you will also see that we still need a way to get there, a way to be more efficient. No city has the money or the staff to do everything. That's why we need and have community initiatives. But I think you would also agree we need better partnerships and dialogue with each other. We need partnerships between organizations that work on challenges like music and art but also homelessness, food insecurity and youth sports. And partnerships between those organizations and the city so that we work together efficiently, with harmony and toward common purpose.

I will propose to the members of the council in the next few weeks that we restructure, reform and expand our current commission program. We need strategic citizen groups that I have strong ties with the city government, and are populated with subject matter experts,, They will offer voice to those who have a passion for a particular topic, set actual goals, and report periodically on their progress. And most importantly, they will care about their community.

This can only work if we work together. This is our chance to return to our true character that has made Escondido the city of choice for so many years. As the saying goes - if you want a new idea read an old book. And so many of you will recognize that many of these concepts were successfully done in the past.

### **Students**

I would be remiss if I didn't point out that we have a number of students attending this year. I'm glad you are here. You are the future, our future, the city's future, and just a few years away from standing where I am standing or having your name mentioned by one of our speakers. You cannot start too early to participate in our community or come up with the next big idea. Don't wait to be told - simply do. See a challenge and address it. You are not too young or inexperienced. You are smart and your ideas are good. I challenge you to walk out of this room today and strengthen your participation in life and our community. Next year I want to hear from you a challenge you took on and solved. So - will you serve our community and start to become its next leaders?

### **Closing**

We are blessed to live in Escondido. Living here, I think of the bumper sticker I saw when I was stationed in the Marine Corps in the South. It said, "American by birth, Southern by the grace of God." I like the second line because I think of myself as an Escondidan by the grace of God. I hope you do too! Please join me in reaffirming the values that have made this city, and let us go into the future as a caring community whose values and faith are the bedrocks we build our future on. Thank you. God bless you and your family, and God bless our United States.